Decentring ELT

Practices and Possibilities

Edited by Amol Padwad and Richard Smith

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Introduction

The 'Decentring ELT' initiative launched in 2018 by the [A.S. Hornby Educational Trust](#) ('Hornby Trust', for short) aims to support the development and dissemination of English Language Teaching (ELT) ideas and actions that are found to be appropriate in particular contexts by the participants concerned, with an initial specific focus on the needs of learners and teachers of English in public education systems in relatively low-income countries.

By means of this book, we aim to deepen understanding and spread awareness of the potential of decentring ELT. So far (see https://www.hornby-trust.org.uk/decentring-elt), the initiative has placed a particular focus on mapping, publicizing and further supporting what teacher associations (TAs) in countries of the Global South do to value and develop local expertise. This initial focus was established largely due to the Hornby Trust's extensive prior involvement in TA development via its alumni and TA project award schemes.

In this book we describe how the initiative has evolved to date. First, we share an initial, provisional characterization of decentring ELT (Chapter 1). We then present findings from an initial consultation process in relation to this provisional characterization, highlighting insights from leaders and members of TAs in Africa, Latin America and South Asia (Chapter 2). In the central part of the book, we present case studies from TAs, sharing specific examples of activities which – from their and our points of view – seem consistent with the provisional characterization of decentring (Chapter 3).

Chapter 4 overviews and provides links to presentations at a 2021 online conference co-organized by the Hornby Trust's Decentring ELT working group, the AINET Association of English Teachers (India) and the Centre for English Language Education, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar University Delhi. This event was organized to mark the 60th anniversary year of the Hornby Trust.

Day 1 of the conference largely reported on the aspects mentioned above, as represented in Chapters 1 to 3 of the book. Day 2 involved opening up discussion to other voices and identifying directions forward. Accordingly, in Chapter 5, we present a report on the panel discussion which opened the second day, and in Chapter 6 we present findings from a questionnaire filled out by participants in the conference. On the basis of all the work carried out since 2018, we then offer a revised version of our characterization of decentring ELT in Chapter 7. Finally, we offer some questions for further reflection and discussion (Chapter 8) and we conclude the book with some possible directions forward for the Decentring ELT initiative.

This publication marks the end of a cycle of work where the main emphasis has been on clarifying the notion of 'decentring ELT' via a focus primarily on the potential contributions of TAs. The book serves as a launch-pad for the next cycle of Hornby Trust activity in the area of decentring ELT, where one aim will be to place a greater focus on initial and in-service teacher education.

Acknowledgments

1 Background to the Decentring ELT initiative

Origins and early development of the initiative

The Hornby Trust, which celebrated its 60th anniversary in 2021, exists to promote 'the advancement of the study of English Language and the teaching and learning of English as a Foreign Language'. However, its founder A.S. Hornby's own interpretation of the goal of 'advancement' was not ethnocentric: with the main source of Trust income having been unexpectedly high sales of his *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, he wanted, in his own words, to 'have the money used for education and go back to the countries from which it comes'. Although the major Hornby Trust activity has until now always been to support ELT professionals from relatively low-income countries to study at universities in the UK as 'Hornby scholars' (with 450 + scholarships awarded to date), the purpose of this has been to enable capacity- and status-building among teachers of English in the Global South rather than to bolster UK ELT. (Details about the Hornby scholarship scheme and other activities supported by the Hornby Trust can be found on its website: https://www.hornby-trust.org.uk.)

Thus, an implicit overall goal of the Hornby Trust has always been to enable capacity- and status-building among teachers of English in relatively low-resource contexts. The 'Decentring ELT' initiative – started by Trustees in 2018 – has been making this goal more explicit, with a particular focus on mapping, publicizing and further supporting what Teacher Associations (TAs) in the countries concerned do to value and develop local expertise. The initiative's initial focus on TAs was established largely due to the Hornby Trust's extensive prior involvement in TA development via its alumni and TA project award schemes (see website). It was felt on this basis of experience that TAs can represent sites for sustainable decentring activities, being community not individual based, and characterized by voluntary participation over time.[1] However, TAs represent only the initial focus for an initiative which we envisaged being extended into other sectors (including teacher training systems) in the future.

The sub-committee taking forward this initiative (at that time, Richard Kiely, Richard Smith and Martin Wedell (Hornby Trustees); Darío Banegas, Harry Kuchah Kuchah and Amol Padwad (Hornby alumni)) organized a special two-day meeting (termed a 'Hornby ELT Forum') just before the April 2019 IATEFL conference to bring together representatives from several TAs known for their innovative projects.[2] At this Forum, the concept of decentring was discussed on the basis of illustrative case studies from India (AINET), Argentina (FAAPI), DR Congo (CLASS), Kenya (BETA-SIAYA), Cameroon (CAMELTA), Chile (RICELT) and Nepal (NELTA), and the core committee (referred to as 'we' below) then came up with a preliminary characterization of decentring ELT on this basis.

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1   For further background to the intentions of the initiative and explanation of its initial focus on teacher associations, see this blog post: https://richardsmithelt.wordpress.com/2018/08/28/decentring-elt/

2   See Acknowledgments (previous page) for the list of participants

A provisional characterization of decentring ELT

Following the April 2019 ELT Forum, some of the illustrative case studies from TAs were written up and disseminated via the Hornby Trust website: https://www.hornby-trust.org.uk/decentring-elt. Additionally, on the basis of these case studies and discussion at the ELT Forum, we (i.e. the core committee) formulated the following provisional characterization, with the intention in mind of publicizing this and seeing whether decentring ELT might be viewed as more broadly applicable:

What is 'decentring ELT'? (v.1, 2019)

"The world of ELT has been characterized by a hegemony of 'global' or 'centre' ELT approaches and materials developed outside the teaching contexts in which they are expected to be used. However, these approaches and materials ('frames for action') are not necessarily appropriate to and do not recognise teachers' and other insiders' experience and expertise in those contexts.

Work needs to be put into empowering teachers to develop contextually appropriate thinking and action (on methodology, materials design, curriculum development, teacher education, etc.), in relation to the needs of their local contexts. Empowerment involves collaborating with teachers / encouraging teachers to collaborate with each other to articulate key features of their work, reasons for these, and ways they feel their practice can be improved.

This process can be termed 'decentring ELT', in contrast with English language teaching which is centred on 'outsider' agendas. Decentring ELT is not about proposing new teaching methods, or changes in education policy, but rather about recognizing contextually situated, 'insider' expertise and creativity in actual practice, and through this, supporting teachers and groups of teachers in understanding and extending practices that are effective for them."

We later formulated a revised characterization ('v.2, 2022') - – on the basis of a process of consultation which we describe below

The consultation process

One year after the 2019 ELT Forum, we were in a position to share and seek feedback on the above statement. The aim was not to generalize via a large or representative sample but to initiate further reflection and discussion around the notion of decentring among some interested parties, in other words to engage in a limited consultation. Brief, open-ended questionnaires were sent to 2019 ELT Forum participants, current and former Hornby scholars around the world, and selected TA leaders, as well as members of FAAPI and AINET, in Argentina and India, respectively. The questions (as listed in the following section) invited respondents to consider: whether our statement made sense and resonated with them; whether decentring could be characterized in a different way; and whether they had examples of either 'centring' or 'decentring' practice to share. To illustrate concretely what decentring might look like in practice, we decided also to provide several possible examples from the case studies gathered to date. About these cases, we asked whether they in fact reflected decentring and were valuable, from respondents' perspectives, and we again invited further ideas and examples.

In June 2020, we additionally supported a series of four weekly webinar discussions among leaders of recent projects and initiatives – the Africa ELTA Decentring ELT Webinar Series (available on the Africa ELTA YouTube channel) – to 'unpack and illustrate the notion of decentring ELT'.

By the end of August 2020, a total of 26 completed questionnaires had been received, and all feedback from these and the webinar discussions was collated and organized thematically. Below we reproduce a summary of the feedback received, including some quotations from questionnaire responses and Africa ELTA webinar transcripts.

In the questionnaire, we first shared the 'Provisional characterization of decentring ELT' as reproduced above, and asked the following open-ended questions about it:

1. Does this explanation make sense to / resonate with you?
2. Would you want to explain 'decentring ELT' differently?
3. Are there examples of outsider 'frames for action' dominating ELT in your context?

Taking the last of these first, various examples of dominating outsider frames for action were offered, generally pertaining to textbooks and materials; teacher training/education; native-speakerism; methodological approaches, e.g. CLT; assessment; policy decisions, e.g. curriculum reform; and the introduction of English Medium Instruction (EMI):

British Council along with the ministry of education working together to train secondary English teachers in Peru with the program "Summer School" (Hornby scholar, Peru).

The curriculum for English Language Teaching is designed and developed from the Ministry of Education (MoE) without involving the teachers who are expected to fully implement it. (ELT Forum participant, Kenya).

Teacher training materials are dominantly centre-driven (no option available here) and the trainers were trained in a culture of 'power pedagogies' and teacher-led procedures. … The understanding that the teacher holds the knowledge to be disseminated (by learners and society) further creates a comfort zone in which the teacher enjoys teacher-centred classes (ELT Forum participant, Cameroon).

Many schools in my context especially secondary schools and even universities are still using teaching and learning materials which are designed by external professionals or which are simply imported without any kind of adaptation (Hornby scholar, Rwanda).

In our Government context, especially in the education system, … outsider frames for action are dominating ELT in the sense that teachers who live classroom's realities on daily basis are not involved in any way in issues regarding ELT except … that they are asked to implement what the authorities have put at their disposal. Teachers' experience is not valued, they have no voice and nobody consults them. (ELT Forum participant, D R Congo).

In Nepal, teacher education programs prescribe materials and approaches published in English speaking countries (UK/USA). Teacher training programs focus on CLT, TBLT and Direct methods and monolingual approaches to ELT. Local teacher associations simply reproduce knowledge, ideas and resources from the centre [ELF Forum participant, Nepal].

The British Council's framework for CPD is a classic example for outsider 'frames for action'. International course books used in many private schools in India are another example. TKT, APTIS, tests designed for Indian students by international agencies such as Cambridge, Pearson, etc. are other examples which do not take into account the local contexts (former Hornby scholar, India).

The attempt to use technological resources in ELT (where possible) follows procedures from the centre. (ELT Forum participant, Cameroon).

In Nepal …, in teacher training, there is a trend of expecting some new insights/ content from English native speakers and/or trainers from western world, and many teachers wish to attend the sessions delivered by them although at times it is likely that the ideas delivered by native speakers of English and/or trainers from western world might not be appropriate to the local context (ELT forum participant, Nepal).

In my local context there is no example of outsider 'frames for action' dominating ELT as materials are developed by insiders and there is no prescriptive methodology. However, private schools catering to more affluent children of the society use materials produced by such hegemonic entities. These agencies often promote their own materials in the name of teacher training (former Hornby scholar, India).

There are national standards that are compiled in accordance with international ones and CEFR [Common European Framework of Reference] (former Hornby scholar, Kazahkhstan).

Projects initiated by the experts from the 'centre' fail because they have not taken into consideration local realities (Hornby scholar, Rwanda).

Questionnaire respondents and webinar participants consistently said the provisional characterization of decentring ELT did make sense and resonated with them, but they also suggested some modifications and additions, raised questions and highlighted complexities with regard to several notions, namely:

Notions of 'the centre'

Corresponding with the examples of centred ELT practice that they had given (as reported above), representations of the centre which were suggested for addition to our own statement included 'academia', 'Ministries of Education', 'big publishing houses', 'the capital [city]', and, quite frequently, 'TA leadership' and 'male control', e.g:

'Add focus on decentring from male-control where relevant'
(Hornby scholar, Peru).

Notions of 'insider' and 'outsider'

The clarity of the insider/outsider distinction in our statement was questioned by some. Through buying into global ideas, local centres may be bolstered, or indigenous forms of centring may develop. The 'outsider' is not just the native speaker, nor the 'insider' necessarily the local expert:

> *'Illustrations of centring can be found not just in "frames of action" borrowed from contexts outside the country, but from within home structures'* (TA leader, India).

Nor, indeed, are outsider perspectives necessarily to be rejected. For example:

> *'I have seen that a native speaker, considered as outsider, is more ready to listen to the voice of the real practitioners than an "insider" who … does not know real classroom context'* (former Hornby scholar, India).

Questioning expertise

Some hold a fairly positive view of aspects of 'outsider' expertise or the certainty that they claim to offer:

> *'I find these ready-made solutions convenient and they spare me from the trouble to look for myself!'* (TA leader, India)

However, others believe that greater acknowledgement of and parity with local perspectives is needed:

> *'I don't … underestimate the great support from experts … but [it] could be more appropriate … so that participants develop an intrinsic value to what they are doing'* (ELT Forum participant, Cameroon).

Finally, more than lip-service needs to be paid to localization:

> *'The concern I have is the current trend in my context going under the banner of "localization" … I don't think choosing Iranian names and cities [in textbooks] is what proponents of insider English meant'* (TA leader, Iran).

The notion of 'insider' expertise is also an issue, however. While acknowledging overall that this should be respected, 'rescued' (TA member, Argentina) and, for example, 'rehabilitated via exploration of adoption, adaptation and absorption processes' (TA leader, India), respondents highlighted that the expertise needs to be there in the first place, needs to be recognized by those who hold it, and needs to ultimately feed back into policy.

Thinking and action

For many, the crux of the decentring issue is a change in mindset:

> 'this is simply scratching at the surface … we need to change the mindset first ("everything foreign or imported is better than local!"), and then improve teacher capacity' (TA leader, Pakistan).

This may then, over time, and with repeated opportunities for awareness-raising via discussion, debate and exemplification, transfer into practice:

> 'These [TA] examples show that when voices from the margins or from non-powerful stakeholders are heard, they trigger a chain of reactions … The ripple effect allows such good practices to reach the unreached and the unheard, and open up the stage for more participation' (TA leader, India).

Problematizing decentring

In addition to the problematization of specific notions outlined above, there were also a few comments which raised doubts about agendas that might be embedded in initiatives aiming to support decentring:

> 'The need is to demolish the very notion of "doing something" for decentring and take the ecological approach … the present discourse of decentring seems to emanate from both local and global centring entities … it is again a part of centring process' (TA leader, India).

Overall, we were struck by the diversity and complexity of the responses to the decentring characterization we had provided, while supported in the idea that it could be a valuable notion for further development.

Feedback on examples of decentring ELT in practice

In the questionnaire, we provided some possible examples of positive decentring ELT actions we had come across to date, relating mainly to TAs, with the brief descriptions which follow immediately below. For further details of each, respondents were referred to the Decentring ELT website (some of these examples will reappear in Chapter 3 of this publication, too).

FAAPI (Argentina) 'Writing to be heard in FAAPI conferences': development of an online course to give members more confidence in contributing papers to conferences and publications;

ATER (Rwanda) Encouraging recruitment of members especially in less developed areas and preparing communities in these areas to run their own development workshops and develop their own leaders;

APIBA (Buenos Aires) Organising workshops or other events which enable identification and sharing of local expertise (e.g. a 2017 'Unleashing the power of local language teaching talent' event);

CAMELTA (Cameroon) Inquiring into priorities and expertise of members via questionnaires;

BETA-SIAYA (Kenya) Using local understanding of the challenges that teachers face to produce teaching and examination materials and to provide workshops that help teachers cope better in their actual teaching contexts;

AINET (India) Supporting teachers to inquire more deeply into their classroom situations and develop appropriate ways of teaching to match local needs via teacher-research mentoring;

NELTA (Nepal) Organising a 'Success Story Conference' at which teachers present an experience of recent success in their classrooms;

RICELT (Chile) Setting up a new group independent of existing educational structures to promote research into locally important issues; and

IATEFL GISIG (International) A published collection of stories of teachers' experiences addressing local social issues in English language classrooms in Africa.

In. relation to these, respondents were invited to respond to the following questions:

1. Do you think these examples reflect decentring? Why? / Why not?
2. What kind of value or significance do you see in these examples of practice?
3. Can you add more examples from your own experience or imagination?
4. Could you envisage adopting some of these or other decentring practices?
5. Do you have any other comments?

Those responding to our consultation said the above TA initiatives do reflect a decentring philosophy, because (variously):

'They involve teachers' reflection, participation, and discussion about relevant topics that respond to their needs.'

'The primary motive for their activities is developed by local teachers, activities managed by them, not based on particular set of assumptions or methodologies, generated from local experience and meant for the locals.'

'The members of the TAs themselves are at the centre and are the "expertise" in the above examples.'

'Those Teacher Associations value their members' initiatives.'

'These associations are trying to support teachers to take responsibility of their own professional development by creating community of practice in local context.'

'Teachers take responsibilities of their own professional development without relying on external assistance. These are local initiatives which are not "exported" and/ or "imposed" by the "centre"; so, their likelihood for success is high.'

'Teachers are consulted throughout, they are actively involved in these initiatives and their expertise, experiences, opinions and thoughts are valued in the entire process.'

'They are initiated by local teachers to address local issues.'

'They all in common focus on enhancing the skills of local teachers.'

'Every project is targeted at local context application in planning their teaching or research experiences.'

Unanimously, respondents also saw value or significance in these examples because they:

▶ empower teachers to become leaders and help other teachers in their communities.

▶ empower and reposition teachers as game changers in learning, a position they have never had. This will gradually become the foundation for creating egalitarian societies: more learning will occur; learners will be brought up in a culture of empowerment and will also learn to empower others.

▶ *[enable] members who have been involved in the activities [to develop] 'local expertise'.*

▶ *encourage English language teachers to be more responsible of their own profession.*

▶ *enable teachers to be critical of their own practices, identify the problems they face and then find adequate solutions which are adapted to their particular contexts.*

▶ *do not come from outsiders; they are pure initiatives from local needs.*

▶ *show the way forward for classroom practitioners. These are inspirational, motivating as well as supportive.*

▶ *build on local teachers' stories and voices.*

▶ *cover different stages and aspects of decentring from understanding the context, needs analysis and defining goals to teacher development.*

▶ *support events and courses as well as providing a platform for sharing stories and experiences.*

▶ *have attempted to enhance the skills of local teachers primarily through the support of their own colleagues.*

▶ *focus on identifying and valuing local teachers' expertise.*

▶ *help the teachers gain context-sensitive strategies to deal with their potential classroom challenges.*

▶ *help teachers solve their own problems through classroom research [in the example from India] so that, on the one hand, the teachers gain confidence to manage their regular classroom issues and, on the other hand, they rely less on imported knowledge from the western world which at times might not be relevant to their context.*

▶ *[do not limit teachers only] to their [own] teaching/learning activities, rather they become mentors for their own colleagues as they start sharing their knowledge and experiences related to teaching and learning in conferences and workshops.*

At the same time, however, one respondent argued as follows:

> *'This self-appropriation of English language teaching practices [which] is crucial for any endeavour to improve English language teaching … becomes easier and useful when there is some external support "from the centre" to boost their professional practices.'*

When invited to share further examples of decentring practice from their own experience or imagination, respondents came up with the following examples:

▶ *a training program within the school, getting together with teachers, and identifying their needs in order to improve their teaching practice.* (Peru)

▶ *In the CAMELTA teacher mobility scheme, teachers left their schools and visited / observed colleagues teaching, shared experiences and reported to the group. In some instances they planned together*

and taught others' learners and administered a questionnaire to the learners on the conduct of the lessons and subsequently reported their experience to the group. (Cameroon)

▶ *Teachers who have produced ELT materials mentor others who have yet to become experts.* (Kenya)

▶ *'Aspire Debate Rwanda' is a non-profit local organisation that mainly aims to develop public speaking and leadership skills of the youth in Rwanda. It has a good partnership with the English language club in my college. This club can be said to be a good example of 'decentring ELT' whereby students work as peers to develop their English skills on their own with little support from their teachers.* (Rwanda)

▶ *I am thinking of initiating an ELT network in West Bengal.* (India)

▶ *Making women group leaders of several of the 'communities of practice' in the latest Hornby-funded project – this has really increased the confidence of the women concerned (although their command of English is not nearly as strong as the men's, due to lack of opportunities) and [has increased] the respect the men have for them.* (Guinea Bissau)

▶ *Creating simple materials for class use from short texts written by teachers about social / local issues – many of which are about gender issues such as child marriage, teen pregnancy, roles of women etc. – and creation of one-sheet, folded handouts containing several of these texts to cut down on photocopying costs (which teachers have to pay themselves – they have no materials otherwise).* (Guinea Bissau)

▶ *We can work on projects such as production of local materials, teacher-research and teacher innovations.* (Nepal)

▶ *I think teacher training, teacher education and teacher development courses will help teachers understand the concept of 'decentring ELT'. They cannot decentre on their own.* (India)

▶ *Organizing some events to discuss the decentring ELT initiatives and making the participants share what the possible decentring ELT initiatives we can try out in our regions.* (Nepal)

▶ *Making a local teacher trainer co-facilitate with a trainer if the latter trainer is from English speaking countries and/or the western world so that he/she can help in planning and delivering the training taking account of the local realities and by informing local context to a trainer from English speaking countries and/or western world and make a teacher training appropriate to the local context.* (Nepal)

▶ *Association of EFL teachers of Kazakhstan arranged at different times Village Projects to set interactive and engaging tasks that relate to teachers' classroom context.* (Kazakhstan)

When asked if they could envisage adopting some of the above or other decentring practices, respondents answered as follows:

▶ *Yes, for example, sharing our best teaching experiences with other teachers in conferences or workshops so teachers may replicate them.* (Peru)

▶ *I envisage doing the success story conference (still working on the framework so it doesn't simply become an event). I want to make it an activity during which the participants develop lessons from the successes reported by others – adding the local materials dimension to it – and then go teach the lessons, reflect on them and share their experiences. My hope is that, through the whole process, participants can be involved in a critical learning process, which is very necessary in destabilising some of the robust strategies they have developed.* (Cameroon)

▶ *Yes, I think it would be a great idea to work with my fellow English language teachers, in small associations, in order to reflect on our practices and come up with innovative solutions to local problems we face while teaching English, without relying on external assistance.* (Rwanda)

▶ *Yes, I will share with CLASS members some of these examples to see how we can contextualise them in DRC.* (DR Congo)

▶ *In fact during Covid induced lockdown I have been interacting with friends abroad how we could support ELT practitioners and came to a decision that a community of practice would be the first step of self support. So I do intend to start such a CoP in my local context and collaborate with existing CoPs for supporting ELT practitioners in school level in West Bengal, India.* (India)

▶ *Yes. I liked the [APIBA] idea of local language teaching talent.* (Nepal)

▶ *Mentoring teachers, mentoring teacher research, collaborative action research and school-based initiatives may be some of the ways in which decentring practices can be adopted. It's important to make school leaders part of this loop.* (India)

▶ *In our context, the centralized educational system and nation-wide end-of-the-school and university entrance exams do not leave much space and options for action. Therefore, I believe the most effective and realistic measure to take is investing on teacher professional development and supporting them to find their own way through all the existing mismatches and leading their students through all the existing confusion toward a more quality teaching and learning.* (Iran)

▶ *Yeah, I would love to run and take part in the events that discuss the decentring ELT initiatives. And also, I would love to encourage the teacher association (TA) or any other institutions to come up with a policy of having a local teacher trainer to collaborate with the teacher trainer from English speaking countries and/or western world if a teacher trainer from English speaking country or western world is invited.* (Nepal)

▶ *AINET (India) has reported on mentoring on teacher-research. Teacher-research is so powerful to understand the classroom issues and to design the appropriate strategies to address those issues. It helps the teachers to deal with their classroom issues on their own. We have been mentoring*

teachers to conduct exploratory action research in Nepal. And I would love to expand this or help some interested colleagues or TA or any other institutions to expand this further. (Nepal)

▶ *It could be good for Kazakhstan to train teachers to inquire deeply into their classroom contexts.* (Kazakhstan)

Finally, respondents were invited to leave any further comments, and the following ideas or actions were suggested:

▶ *Local strategies for support and incentives could be generated and developed with limited influence from experts.*

▶ *Another forum should be created by Hornby to allow us explore the theme of decentring ELT after the pandemic (COVID-19) is fully contained.*

▶ *The majority of novice teachers need models and defined frames of action to start teaching. Reflective practices, while undoubtedly necessary, are not usually as effective for them as for those with some experience of teaching. Therefore, they need more support and class observation to get an idea of how to teach effectively. Later on mentoring and reflective practices can be of a huge benefit and an indispensable part of professional development for them. Then it is the time when decentring can play an outstanding role for teachers.*

▶ *create some platforms for ELT practitioners to get involved in decentring ELT initiatives, such as organizing a success story conference and helping them to take part in such events, and at the same time, we need to run some events to discuss the concept and possible practices related to decentring ELT to make people know the value of decentring ELT initiatives.*

▶ *It could be good to run online conference to exchange these experiences.*

As we have seen, respondents to our initial consultation highlighted a number of often interrelated features in the case studies we provided which reflected decentring as they understood it. The respondents also provided a range of further examples of activities in their own contexts that they believed supported or demonstrated 'decentring ELT', showing an awareness of decentring activities already occurring in their context. These included TA activities which: value local expertise (e.g., a directory of local speakers); develop teacher agency (e.g., through local communities of practice, mentoring, and teacher-research); and identify and address teachers' local needs via context-sensitive strategies (e.g. producing teaching guides and training packages). Respondents also expressed a willingness either to implement ideas they had heard about or engage in other activities which would reflect a decentring philosophy. To conclude, the majority of respondents were able to envisage adopting decentring practices, and many said they already did so. For example, one respondent commented:

'This is a timely and important project to diversify the knowledge and resources in ELT' (ELT Forum participant, Nepal).

3 Decentring initiatives by teacher associations

Introduction to case studies

Our work with decentring has, so far, always been related to, indeed is grounded in, knowledge of actual practice rather than just being theoretical or programmatic. In illustration of this, we present below eight case studies of initiatives undertaken by teacher associations which can be seen to serve as examples of decentring in practice. Some of these informed our provisional characterization of decentring ELT (in Chapter 1 above) while others developed or became known to us later. The case studies, from Guinea-Bissau, DR Congo, Kenya, Argentina, Cameroon, Chile, India and Nepal, illustrate different features of decentring but all demonstrate in concrete ways how TAs can operate as agents of decentred change in their (national or regional) local contexts, showing that TAs have the potential to engage in decentred practice through contextually relevant and locally guided initiatives. The common strands they seem to illustrate involve:

- localization and devolution of activities;
- drawing on local expertise and resources;
- building communities and sharing experiences, ideas, resources and expertise for collective benefit;
- exploring needs and capabilities of members and ways of enhancing their capacity;
- developing locally based responses to practical challenges and issues.

Each case study begins with a brief description of the context concerned and describes a key initiative of the TA in terms of its objectives, nature and implementation. This is then followed by an account of perceived gains from the initiative, lessons learned, and how decentring appears to be inherent in the initiative, from authors' perspectives. We hope and believe that these studies will provide valuable insights and practical ideas for readers which may be adaptable in their own contexts for different purposes.

Developing a National Curriculum and CoPs to support teachers with context-relevant materials for secondary school English language teaching in Guinea-Bissau

Ali Djau *ELTA-GB*

Background

In 2018, in Guinea-Bissau there was virtually no supervision of nor support for English language teachers once they had qualified and started teaching. Neither was there a national curriculum or national tests. So we, ELTA-GB, with financial support from the Hornby Trust, decided to take on the responsibility to create a national curriculum and national tests, and provide in-service training and support for teachers. We had already been attempting to work with the Ministry of Education for several years, and the TA project award enabled us to build on this. Having a good understanding of our students, schools and teachers, we were ideally placed to make key decisions about feasible curriculum goals and materials appropriate to our context. Our main objectives were to:

- develop a national secondary English curriculum and support all English teachers to teach the same content;
- motivate these teachers in all eight regions and involve them in creating their own materials;
- update teaching techniques and introduce social and local issues in classroom teaching and learning.

Once teachers had been introduced to the new curriculum, we then planned to support them with its implementation by developing Communities of Practice (CoPs) in the regions, thereby:

- promoting the sharing of problems and solutions, materials and lesson ideas;
- developing teachers' confidence in their own expertise and knowledge;
- valuing and raising the profile of women in ELTA-GB by encouraging them to lead groups;
- sharing knowledge and expertise in teaching English to students with disabilities (speech and hearing difficulties).

Developing the national curriculum

Our first task was to plan the content of the new curriculum. This involved a lot of discussion via our ELTA-GB WhatsApp group, and a helping hand from Linda Ruas (IATEFL GISIG), who provided us with curricula samples which we could adapt to our context. Much of our discussion centred on the topics we wanted to include and the approach we wanted to take. Traditionally, teachers taught only grammar with very little topic and vocabulary development, skills work or functional language. To

Discussion in the park with the curriculum-writing team, Bissau, April 2019

address this, we decided on the ESAP (Engage, Study, Activate, Practise) lesson format. Then, our curriculum-writing team began, meeting each Saturday morning to draft content, which we emailed to Linda for comment. We also co-wrote short texts and lesson plans during WhatsApp discussions and then tried these out in class.

Once the curriculum was ready, we planned and organized a face-to-face whole-day event to introduce it to 60 English teachers, mostly from Bissau together with some from the regions. After an introduction and overview of the new curriculum by Linda, the team responsible for writing it led small groups in discussing it in more detail. All teachers responded positively.


Introducing the new curriculum, The American Corner, Tchico Te, Bissau, April 2019

Unfortunately, many teachers were unable to implement it immediately due to strikes, which went on for several months. In July, however, we were able to hold another introduction session for 50 more teachers at the National Convention.

Developing CoPs

When the new academic year started in October, teachers were back in the classroom and ready to follow the new curriculum, but they needed a lot of help and support, so we organized some training. We began by ensuring that ten CoP group leaders in Bissau knew how to use the curriculum and the sample materials. Then, the ideas were introduced to all teachers via the WhatsApp group. Weekly discussions were also held to support CoP leaders and groups. In addition to reporting questions and comments, there was a lot of flexibility and creativity during these meetings – some teachers did a little teaching or demonstrated new ideas to others; some showed short videos to discuss; some created materials together. All teachers were very interested in the curriculum and materials and wanted more copies to use.
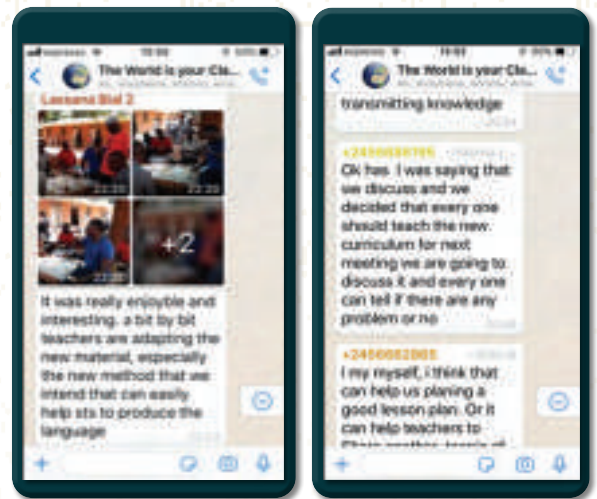
Screen shots from WhatsApp discussions about the curriculum and the CoP groups

Each CoP group also posted monthly meeting reports via the WhatsApp group, which others discussed and commented on. These often included photos and even short videos. Here is one example:

Monthly meeting minutes		
Sunday 22 September 2019	**12:00–13:00**	**Háfia Secondary School**
Group leader	Braima Embaló	
Participant	Arnaldo Umua Mendes	
Participant	Roberto Lirna Sanha	
Participant	Carla Rosa da Silva Sá	
Participant	Viriato Malam Cassama	
Questions & suggestions		

Viriato Malam Cassama: *It is better to introduce both **English** and **French** from **7th** to **12th** grades to avoid multilevel classes for students who studied only French in previous grades as an option.*

Arnaldo Umua Mendes: *Has the new curriculum been approved by the Ministry of Education and INDE yet? If not, then we should work hard for its approval.*

Carla Rosa da Silva Sá: *There should be pages and index for a quick access of the curriculum. It saves time to always have to flip forward and backward. The short texts also should be in a sequential order with the topics for a better use and understanding.*

Roberto Lirna Sanha: *This is a very rich curriculum indeed. It will certainly make my work easier than it used to be. Thank you very much!*

Even though the first half of 2020 proved to be a terrible time in Guinea-Bissau due to political instability and the pandemic, many schools re-opened in September and our ELTA-GB WhatsApp group finally became active again.

Introducing the new curriculum at Háfia High School

Benefits

The new curriculum has benefited both students and teachers. Students now enjoy more meaningful English lessons that include motivating topics and skills work, and they are more involved in interesting activities. Some have learnt how to organize and learn vocabulary using spidergrams; some have learnt how to be more independent and to use their mobile phones to look up words and find information. Teachers have also reported that they find it more enjoyable and easier to teach with the new curriculum and materials.

The CoPs have resulted in many benefits, too. Teachers have learnt to open up and ask when they need support or advice. Traditionally, teachers in Guinea-Bissau are expected to have all the answers, and not discuss teaching, so this is a very positive step forward.

Teachers have also changed their ideas about teaching, for example from reading aloud to silent reading; or from whole class work to pair tasks. We can see this in many comments in the WhatsApp discussions, for example:

> ▶ *'Now I can see that silent reading can work in class – I didn't think it would work with my students.'* (Idrissa)
>
> ▶ *'I tried pairwork and it was difficult at first, but now it works really well and students can participate a lot more.'* (Lassana Biai)

Women have also become a lot more confident and participate more fully in discussions. Some lead CoPs. One, Mariza, delivered a training session on gender awareness. Another, Sidu Le, who teaches at the Escola para Surdos e Mudos (for students with hearing and speech impairment), gave a presentation at the July WhatsApp mini-conference on how to work with sign language. By means of a short training video, she explained how she taught herself sign language (there are no courses in Guinea-Bissau, even for teachers) and taught some signs. She has now become well-respected and the first port of call for advice on teaching students with these disabilities.

What we've learned

We have learned a lot about what has to go into a curriculum and how to balance the teaching of language and skills. We have learned to organize material and plan lessons that all teachers can teach. We have also learned to work together and take responsibility for helping each other. We have learned how to be more focused when reporting during our WhatsApp group meetings, to not give general, but more specific answers to questions. We have also become more energetic and independent, not relying on outsiders but relying on ourselves to work out what and how we should teach. Teacher training is very basic in Guinea-Bissau, but teachers are now professionally developing and successfully writing materials.

Moving forward

What we plan to work on next is producing materials for use in public schools based on our national curriculum. These materials will be based on the ESAP (Engage, Study, Activate, Practise) lesson plan format.

What is 'decentring' about the project?

The aim of this project was to support English language teachers in the south and in the regions with the new curriculum so that they could have regular meetings and share materials and lesson ideas to develop their confidence in their own experience and knowledge. What happened in the CoPs? It was the first time that teachers started talking about their teaching issues. And now, teachers feel comfortable to ask questions and discuss different ideas about teaching. Before this they felt that they should be experts and shouldn't ask questions. But now our teachers understand they can be inspired in their own teaching context. They know what works and they know what doesn't work. Also, as a result of this project, women have become more confident to lead and are respected as group leaders. Before this project women didn't have the confidence to lead groups of teachers and now they have the confidence to lead any kind of group of teachers. Teachers also started talking about how to use technology in teaching, and sharing experiences on how to teach students with disabilities, such as the deaf students. Teachers learned a lot from each other and the whole group via our platform of WhatsApp. Even those teachers who were not directly involved in the CoP project also discussed and learned how to use the new curriculum.

The creation and implementation of communities of practice (CoPs) in Bukavu, Goma and Kisangani for CLASS sustainability

Joseph Kaleba *CLASS*

Background

CLASS is our association of teachers of English in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and we currently have around 500 members. Our mission is to advance teacher-driven professional development in English language teaching and learning by means of:

■ creating a community of teachers with space to share and learn from each other and exchange best practices;

■ providing a wide range of workshops, seminars, conferences, and pedagogical circle exchanges focused on ELT and skills for teacher professional development;

■ supporting teachers through ELT projects, including research, so they can be involved in our activities and develop new skill sets as well as gain experience;

■ partnering with international TAs and other educational organizations to promote scholarship and job opportunities and access to study opportunities abroad;

■ promoting effective teaching, learning and use of English language in both academic and other settings through the creation of English clubs in schools and/or other organizations in DRC;

■ creating spaces for translators and interpreters;

■ promoting national languages in education through the English language;

■ integrating a culture of conflict and violence resolution in connection with gender in English language teaching.

However, CLASS struggles to bring its members together due to distance, lack of funding and facilities, and teachers' living conditions, so we felt it would be useful to create Communities of Practice (CoPs) and train some CoP leaders. The usefulness of this idea is justified in that CoPs have allowed CLASS members in Kisangani, Goma and Bukavu to be organized in smaller groups of not more than 25 members each, following the criterion of proximity. Each group organizes itself by choosing their own leadership, they decide on the venues for their monthly meetings, they agree upon the time to meet and their meeting agendas are a result of consensus. More importantly, no member pays transport costs to meeting venues because they find themselves in the same neighbourhood. This makes it easy to show up regularly and be on time. During their meetings, teachers share experiences and resources, they discuss teaching tips, they build team spirit, they develop mutual respect, and they value one another's contributions, as novices are valued in the same way as veterans.

Our main objective has been to boost CLASS activities in the eastern Congo – Kisangani, Goma, and Bukavu. Specific objectives were to:

- contribute to the promotion of ELT and English language mastery in Kisangani, Goma, and Bukavu;

- provide teachers with modern methods and techniques in the teaching of English in secondary schools;

- increase teachers' involvement in CLASS activities through CoPs;

- help CLASS increase and maintain its members.

Training, creation of CoPs and election of CoP leaders

In February 2019, we organized three-day training events in Kisangani, Goma, and Bukavu. I was the only validated trainer within CLASS-DRC at the time, having worked in the team of faciliators in the Connecting Classrooms 3 (CC3) programme in Rwanda for three years, so I delivered the training sessions in each of the three locations. (Today, the number of trainers has dramatically increased to 54, thanks to the British Council's English Connects programme.)

Since the goal was 'CLASS sustainability', the training participants needed to be active CLASS members. 120 teachers took part: 50 in Kisangani, 40 in Goma and 30 in Bukavu. Participants came from different networks, from catholic, protestant, government and private schools. Each provincial president selected the participants, giving priority to the active members. Each event followed the same programme:

	Focus	Details
Day 1	**Best practice in the classroom**	• Knowing our pupils' names • Referring to the national curriculum • Using a balanced curriculum • Adopting a good position
Day 2	**Best practice in the classroom**	• Giving clear instructions for activities • Providing a model task monitoring the groups as they work • Using gestures • Providing feedback to exercises
Day 2	**Professional development**	• Joining associations: national (e.g. CLASS) or international (e.g. TESOL/ IATEFL) • Attending local and/or global annual conferences, e.g. CLASS, TESOL or IATEFL • Developing leadership skills (TESOL's leadership programs)
Day 3	**Introduction of CoPs**	• Why CoPs are beneficial: the advantages • Examples of CoP activities • Keys to CoP success • Reasons for resisting CoPs and managing these

Workshop programme

Training teachers in Bukavu town

Participants after completing the workshop in Bukavu town

By the end of the training, 15 CoPs were created and their leaders were elected as well. Among those 15 CoP leaders there are 4 female leaders – 2 in Kisangani and 2 in Goma. Participants were then given time to plan their meeting venues, days and times.

Kisangani	Goma	Bukavu
Makiso CoP	Mwanga CoP	INPP CoP
Mangobo CoP	Katindo CoP	Together we can CoP
Kabondo CoP	Kyeshero 1 CoP	Go Forward CoP
Lubunga CoP	Kyeshero 2 CoP	Panzi CoP
Tshopo CoP	Ndosho CoP	Nguba CoP

The 15 CoPs

A WhatsApp group was also created, which has enabled continued coaching of CoP leaders remotely.

Positive outcomes

The CoPs in Bukavu, Goma and Kisangani are now well-established. Each CoP consists of 10–15 local teachers, who meet regularly in their schools or communities. All members, whether novice or veteran, are respected and valued. They discuss what happens in their classrooms for the purpose of seeking each other's advice and feedback. Their main activities include sharing teaching tips and exploring classroom challenges as well as discussing teaching theory or principles in relation to actual practice. CoPs also aim to establish sustainable networks for the sharing of information and ELT expertise in the form of, for example, teaching materials and practices that have potential to improve teaching and learning of English. These 'decentred forums' are progressively developing a kind of autonomous networking habit among CLASS members in the eastern part of DRC.

Moreover, CLASS now has national, regional, provincial, and CoPs' WhatsApp groups. This medium of communication is cheap and practical in the context of DRC. It also allows all members to share and receive information or resources (books, teaching tips, videos, pictures, etc.), and it encourages equality by recognizing that each member's contribution is valued.

Further illustrations of CLASS decentring activities

Conferences and workshops

The CLASS annual conference is a rotating event. While the first two were held in Kinshasa in 2017 and 2018, the third was planned to be held in Goma in the North Kivu province in 2020. However, this was cancelled due to the Ebola and Covid-19 pandemics. It is now being planned to take place in Mbujimayi in December 2022. Additionally, regional/provincial conferences and workshops are sometimes organized so that local members can easily participate and attend.

Local English clubs

During workshops, conferences or any other occasion that brings teachers together, teachers are trained / encouraged to create English clubs in their schools in order to provide an English language practice environment. This is important in DRC, where English is a school subject rather than a medium of communication or instruction. English clubs are organised outside classroom settings; and club leaders are generally secondary school or college/university students who receive some training on how to run English clubs on their own.

Members meet regularly to practise speaking, listening, reading and writing in English in a casual setting. They practise English by playing games and doing activities that promote critical thinking, effective communication and collaboration. Learners share knowledge and awareness of real problems affecting their own community and discuss ways to solve them. They use English to discuss issues like democracy, elections, corruption, interpersonal conflicts, and community problems such as rape, violence, crime and theft, which tend not to be discussed at school. CLASS values English clubs' activities because they help Congolese learners develop a degree of autonomy in the learning process.

Collaboration with neighbouring TAs

CLASS-DRC has worked with ATER-Rwanda, UNELTA-Uganda and TELTA-Tanzania to found the African Lake Zone English Language Consortium (ALZELC). With support from the American RELO in East Africa, these four TAs have started organizing an annual international conference. In 2018, the first was held in Mwanza, Tanzania, and in 2019 it was held in Kampala, Uganda.

Locally run summer schools

Local CLASS members in some provinces organize summer schools for secondary and/or college/ university students to learn English during the holidays.

What we've learned

From our experiences of CoPs and the other decentring activities described above, we have learned that members work better in smaller groups than when they are in big number. Also, by reducing the distance to meetings, teachers are motivated to join and they feel independent. As for conference rotation, more teachers are given the opportunity to attend such events as it is impossible to gather all teachers in one location. All in all, decentring activities have proven beneficial as chances increase when things do not depend exclusively on only one source or dominant figure.

Moving forward

In relation to decentring, CLASS future plans are as follows:

- Expand the CoPs initiative in other provinces including Kinshasa, the capital city.
- Keep organizing conferences and workshops in rotation; Kinshasa will not be the focus for all CLASS activities.
- Increase training for English club leaders in schools.
- Empower members to become self-reliant and more creative in order to find realistic solutions to their problems.
- Organize training of trainers so that CLASS can have a team of local trainers.

Developing teachers' capacity to create their own contextually appropriate teaching materials

Fredrick Otieno Odhiambo *BETA-SIAYA ELT Group*

Background

In Kenya, the teaching of literature in English has proved problematic for teachers for some time. Largely, this is due to the fact that the Ministry of Education (MoE) made the decision to introduce new set texts to examination classes (upper classes F3–4) every three years. Moreover, teachers are never involved in the selection of the texts; nor are they provided with Teacher Guides. As a result, teachers are forced to teach new texts with little or no support, relying only on their own knowledge and previous experience, which may not prove sufficient for the new ideas and language covered in these set texts. There is, therefore, a need to develop teachers', and especially our TA (BETA-SIAYA ELT Group) members', capacity to write their own contextually appropriate Teacher Guides.

With this in mind, in 2018, a small number of our TA members did in fact produce such a Teacher Guide – *Study Notes to Blossoms of the Savanna* – and it was immediately clear that the skills and expertise these members had gained should be cascaded to all TA members and a wider audience since there were still no Teacher Guides available for other set texts.
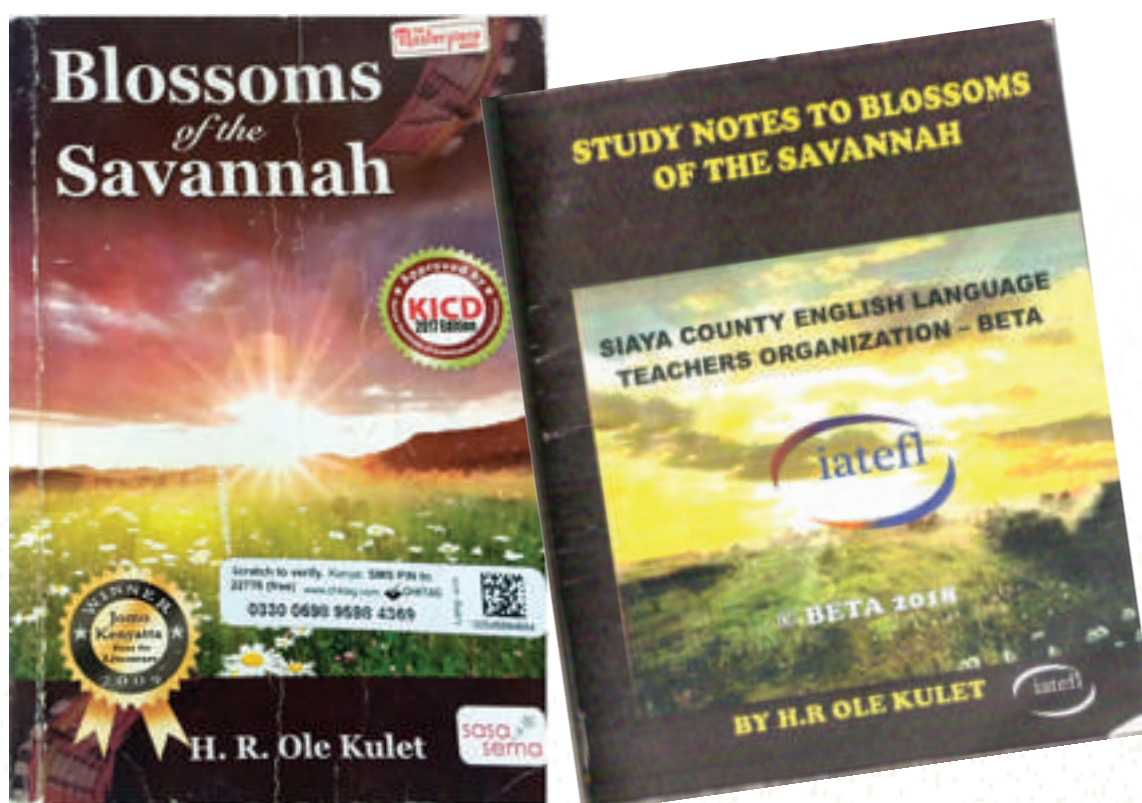
The process of doing this would also enable those involved in producing the first Teacher Guide to take a lead in the training and support of others. Our main objectives, therefore, were to:

- broaden access to and use of the existing Teacher Guide (*Study Notes to Blossoms of the Savanna*);

- involve teachers from a wider range of schools in the area (Siaya), and more local members of the TA, in developing a second Teacher Guide, thereby using more teachers' experiences to generate ideas for this second guide and spreading the idea of writing and publishing Teacher Guides for English literature texts;

- create opportunities for wider teacher participation in the development of Teacher Guides for new texts;

- disseminate our experience of writing Teacher Guides more widely across Kenya and other countries in the region that follow the Kenyan integrated language and literature path.

Production of the second Teacher Guide

In July 2019, we introduced the existing Teacher Guide, *Study Notes to Blossoms of the Savanna*, to 137 teachers – 117 of these were TA members, and 20 were selected from other schools by their Department Heads – during a one-day workshop.

Then, in August of the same year, we brought together the same 117 TA members and at least two teachers from each of the ten counties for a brainstorming session on ideas for the second Teacher Guide, to be used with the set text *A Doll's House*.

Teachers contributing and discussing ideas for the Teacher's Guide

After deciding on which ideas to use, different areas (plot analysis / synopsis; characterization / character analysis; thematic issues; stylistic devices; revision questions) were allocated to small groups of 3–5 teachers. Then the manuscript, *Study Notes on A Doll's House*, was drafted and proofed.

Team members working on the manuscript

A team of more and less experienced TA members then supervised the publishing and printing of 140 copies.
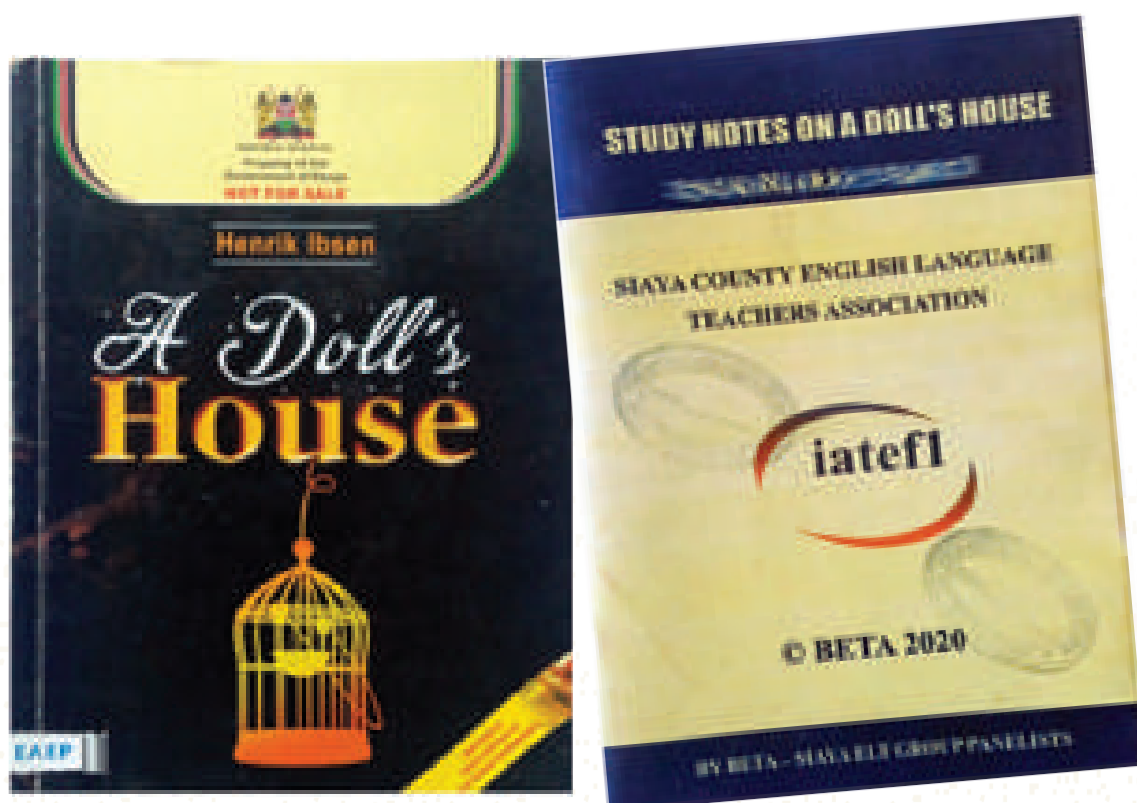
Finally, in December 2020, all team members met to launch the new guide, and a hard copy and USB flash drive copy was given to each participant / member school free of charge.

Team members at the book launch

Fredrick Otieno Odhiambo, team leader, receives his free copy

Positive outcomes

Benefits to learners

Firstly, the use of the guides seems to have contributed to learners' improved performance in the final examination in member schools, as evidenced by increasing mean scores in Form 4, Term 1 exam results between 2019 and 2021.

Benefits to our TA (BETA-SIAYA ELT Group)

As a result of the Teacher Guide initiative, many teachers from other counties joined our group, increasing our membership from 117 to 211.

Benefits to teachers

In response to an evaluation questionnaire, respondents from 23 member schools reported the Teacher Guides as 'good' (2), 'very good' (9) or 'excellent' (12), and 70 per cent reported that they had made their work easier in terms of lesson preparation.
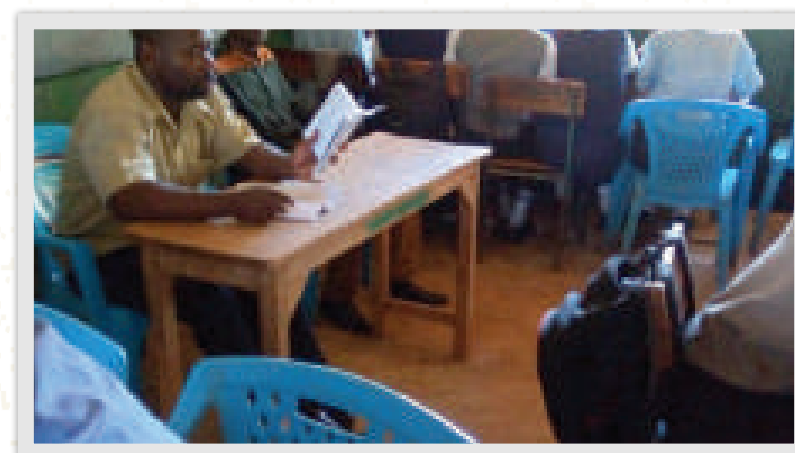
Teachers guiding discussion on questions from the guide
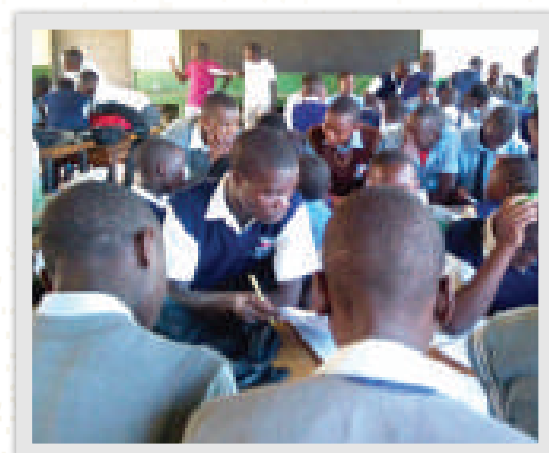
Learners using the study guide in groups

Moreover, as a result of limited face-to-face contact due to the pandemic, we began holding virtual meetings via Zoom, which we continue to do, and as a result more teachers are able to participate, develop professionally and use digital tools.

We were also able to disseminate information about the Teacher Guide initiative more widely with teachers and head teachers of schools who had not participated in the project. We introduced the Teacher Guides to teachers in National Examination Marking Centres in April 2021, and recommended the guides to their head teachers during conferences and meetings in May. Most teachers were enthusiastic, bought copies for their schools and expressed interest in joining our TA and getting involved in future publications. Most head teachers requested more copies for their schools and were prepared to pay for them.

What we've learned

From our experience, we have learned that team work and consultation are crucial at all stages in the management of a project and that responsibilities must be shared. We also found that some TA members could not meet the agreed deadlines and had to be pushed by the team leaders through reminders.

Moving forward with decentring

Wherever possible, we use local expertise and BETA-Siaya ELT Group is now writing more Teacher Guides for the next round of set books that has been approved by the MoE for 2022–2025. For this, we decided to involve more teachers in the process of writing the guides.

In March 2022, 12 teachers (members of the TA) were selected to initiate the process, and to date the team has held three meetings in different member schools to collect facts and ideas about teaching the new set book *The Samaritan* by John Lara, published by the Kenya Literature Bureau. These teacher members have divided the areas (i.e. plot / synopsis; characterization / character analysis; themes; language and style; revision questions) amongst themselves to work on in pairs.

The first draft of the manuscript was shared with all TA members in May during a meeting held in one of the schools. Members gave comments and feedback by means of a questionnaire, which the writing committee then discussed in July. Changes were made and the revised manuscript will again be shared with members for comment in November.

Additionally, there are plans to engage more members in the writing of another guide book beginning in December. There are three new set books for literature and this will be the first guide for the new books. The experience gained from writing the previous guide books will be used to encourage other TA members to take the initiative in producing further guide books and this will also encourage wider member participation.

APIBA on the move: building a new paradigm through decentring practices

Maria Angela Di Gaetano, Melina Gostissa,
Maria Laura Garcia & Paula Lopez Cano *APIBA*

Introduction: What is APIBA?

APIBA (Asociación de Profesores de Inglés de Buenos Aires) is the professional association of graduate English teachers in the city and the wider Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina, and since its foundation in 1971, it has provided professional development opportunities for its members. The association organizes different events such as an Annual Seminar which includes plenary presentations by renowned teachers and scholars, concurrent sessions and workshops, monthly SIG (Special Interest Group) meetings and, more recently, a series of webinars led and attended by teachers all over the country.

In recent years, the association has made decentring a core objective of the activities proposed in order to generate opportunities for new voices in our context and provide the space for teachers to exchange experiences and inspiring practices. This aim is in keeping with the need to empower local teachers to collaborate with each other, engage in critical reflection and construct local knowledge with a view to improving their practice and enhancing their contribution to the educational community.

In this spirit, APIBA has implemented a number of different strategies to support all its members, fostering links among teachers and student teachers in the city and the wider Province of Buenos Aires. In the following sections, we will describe these initiatives developed by APIBA:

- Apiba on Tour

- Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

- 'Call for Nominations' Campaign

- Students' Showcase.

Apiba on Tour

Apiba on Tour was launched in 2016 in response to the pressing need to reach the vast number of teachers in the Province of Buenos Aires by fostering a spirit of collaboration among teachers and teacher trainees and, in this way, supporting existing initiatives in different teacher training colleges and regional state-run teacher development centres.

Since 2018 this programme has established partnerships in different regions in the province to ensure that the activities planned within the Apiba on Tour framework are geared towards meeting the needs of local teachers and their classrooms. We wanted to move beyond the traditional approach of

sending a speaker from the City of Buenos Aires to give a presentation with little contact with the local reality. We intended to include local voices to highlight the relevance of the co-construction of knowledge in collaborative settings.

All in all, the guiding spirit of Apiba on Tour is about building and strengthening our strong professional network by fostering understanding, solidarity and inclusion among English language teachers who may have limited opportunities for professional development. We aim to promote collaborative learning, exploring our teaching practices, finding inspiration in our teaching and valuing local voices.

Meeting this big challenge involves detailed advanced planning for optimal organization given the limited resources available to our association. First, we contact different institutions to present our project and to invite them to be part of Apiba on Tour. We get involved in joint planning with our partner institution and gather information about their specific needs to choose the topics of the workshops and the possible speakers. In general, APIBA invites a speaker, and the host institution selects a local expert and local teachers and student teachers to lead presentations and workshops. Then, APIBA is in charge of publicizing 'the tour' and the host provides a venue, enrols attendees, and works with local authorities to obtain support for the event.

The Apiba on Tour gatherings provide an ideal opportunity to present our teacher association and, in this way, promote expanded membership.

The advent of the pandemic and the subsequent restrictions forced a pause on the project and, instead of physically touring the province, we have started a series of monthly webinars which serve the purpose of reaching remote places and including many more participants who can join our online training sessions.

APIBA ON TOUR

Confirmed destinations
Luján
Campana
Bragado
Lincoln
Pergamino
La Plata
Mar del Plata

We're ready to go

API BA
on tour

ontour@apiba.org.ar

Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

APIBA SIGs came into existence in the year 2000 as communities of practice within our association and give their participants the opportunity to share ideas, exchange opinions and engage in professional development on an equal footing. The most salient feature of the SIGs is their democratic spirit since they are neither seminars nor lectures, but discussion forums that enable their members to decide on the topics for further exploration and debate. Their non-hierarchical organisation is ensured by their autonomy in terms of decision-making and the election of coordinators.

As a result of the lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the activities of our SIGs have moved online. The shift to virtuality has given rise to several significant changes. First and foremost, our SIGs have succeeded in reaching more teachers and student teachers from all corners of our province, the country, and even the world. This phenomenon has, in turn, led to increased levels of engagement: not only do regular participants attend meetings more often but new members have joined the SIGs as well. The SIGs have also witnessed a rising interest in novel projects, organization of events and participation in webinars and conferences, such as the APIBA Annual Seminar and the APIBA SIGs Opening Event. Furthermore, the growth of these communities of practice has resulted in the formation of new SIGs such as the Teacher Research SIG and the Public Schools SIG, and the development of outreach activities with other associations and educational institutions.
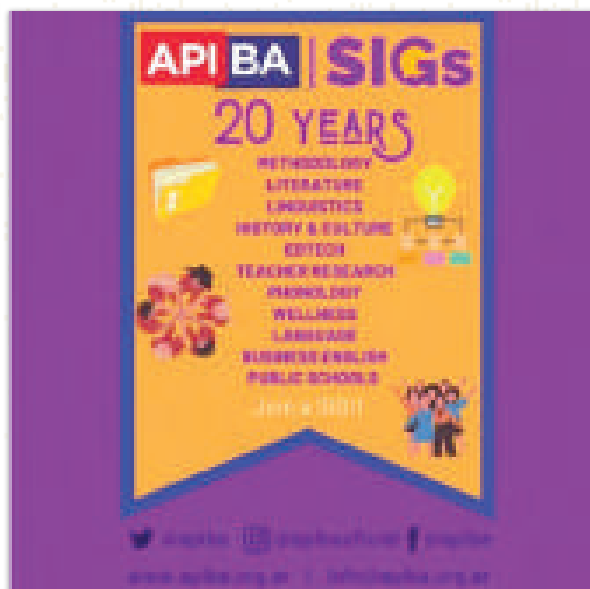
Since their creation at the dawn of the 21st century, the SIGs have proved to be the lifeblood of our association in terms of fostering continuing professional development and building a strong network of both teachers and teacher trainees. Alongside these long-standing achievements, a number of major challenges lie ahead. The time is ripe for a concerted effort to engage these communities of practice in more focused work involving research, mentoring, advocacy, writing and publishing online, among other options. If these actions are carried out, they are bound to exert a profound impact on the visibility of the SIGs, their academic production, and their commitment to collaborative learning, thus making a valuable contribution to the professional development of members and the community of ELT practitioners in general.

'Call for nominations' campaign and student teachers showcase

In 2019 we organized our first 'Call for Nominations' aimed at amplifying the voice of our members and inviting new members to share their work and participate in future APIBA events. We wanted to identify voices who could share inspiring ideas about emergent topics or some unpublished work with a wider audience.

APIBA is constantly looking for local speakers who can inform, motivate and contribute to the different events we organize, and we thought it was a great initiative to give voice to teachers who are not usually featured in ELT events.

As part of our media campaign to identify new ELT talents, we published our 'Call for Nominations' on our social media networks so that our members could recommend future speakers and encourage colleagues to submit proposals and share their experiences. The Covid-19 pandemic took our traditional programme to the online environment. We started organizing professional development webinars with a more diverse speaker line-up which included experienced and novice speakers as a result of our 'Call for Nominations' campaign. Some of these new speakers shared their work on relevant areas such as special needs, hybrid education, online games, and instant poetry among many others.

We also started to encourage student teachers to present their work as part of APIBA events. This is not altogether new as APIBA welcomes student teachers in its different projects, such as APIBA SIGs and the Annual Seminar. In 2018, teachers-to-be joined Apiba on Tour and shared some of their assignments, lesson plans and projects with their local communities. In 2021, student teachers presented samples of their work as part of APIBA Online Annual Seminar and reached a wider audience. Students from three different teacher training colleges in Buenos Aires gave presentations in concurrent sessions on digital materials, universal design and how to approach controversial topics in the ELT classroom. This proved to be a rewarding experience as it was the first time they had given a presentation in front of a real audience and our members enjoyed the refreshing ideas they presented.
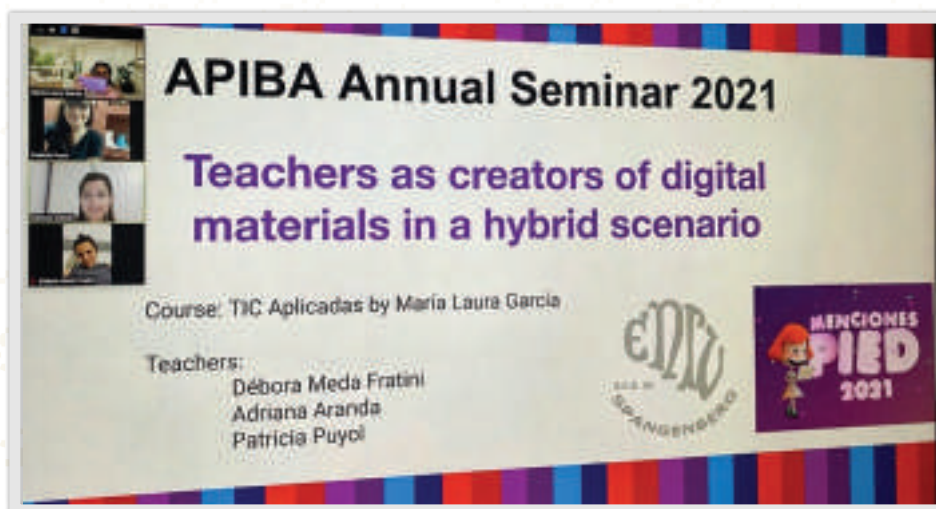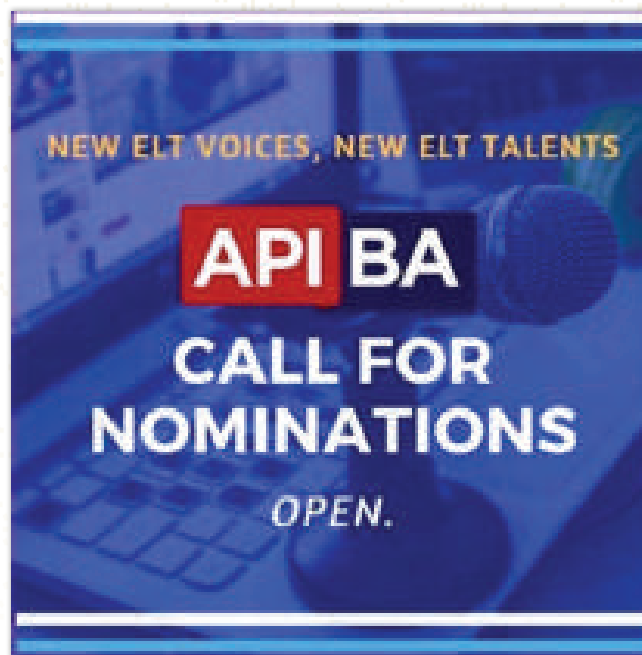
This year we have continued with these initiatives and invited student teachers to present in webinars. We have made some progress along these lines, but we still have to generate confidence in student teachers and fight the entrenched idea that novice teachers have little relevant work to share with colleagues. As a local teacher association, we value and support the emergence of new voices that address current teaching concerns, and we hope more and more student teachers and novice teachers will feel motivated to join our events to help us build a stronger and more inclusive professional network.

Engaging in decentring activities

As highlighted in the activities described, APIBA has always tried to empower the local ELT community. We developed different programmes and supported initiatives with the aim of collaborating with each other and constructing local knowledge even before the concept of 'decentring ELT' began to gain currency among ELT practitioners. Most of our professional gatherings and academic events give local teachers the opportunity to present their experiences, the challenges they face in their context and possible solutions. They also offer student teachers a place to grow professionally, participate actively and present their projects. Although we are beginning to see evidence of a change of mindset towards decentring policies, it is still hard to move away from the influence of big publishing houses, academia and well-known international and local speakers who are often distant from our local reality and what happens in today's classrooms. For that reason, we keep on seeking a wider range of professional development options to satisfy our members' needs and wants. We still look for international and local experts because many of our members enjoy listening to them, but we are strongly committed to bottom-up initiatives to build higher levels of autonomy and agency among our members.

Moving forward

All in all, we believe that as an association we have risen to the challenges posed by the pandemic by transforming our traditional programmes into viable online options. We have met the needs of our community and reached more teachers and student teachers all over the country. We have made significant steps towards recognizing local expertise, promoting local knowledge and encouraging more teachers to engage in collaborative learning.

At present we are faced with two forces pulling in opposite directions: staying online and reaching more people through the benefits of technology or organizing in-person events for our members and other possible attendees who value and cherish close contact and on-site networking opportunities. This calls for a collective response which requires creativity to find a suitable blend of the benefits of remote practices and person-to-person bonding and relationship building, which is the hallmark of a thriving professional association.

Decentring ELT practices in teacher associations: evidence from CAMELTA

Eric Ekembe *CAMELTA*

Introduction

If decentring ELT links with contextually appropriate thinking and action in ELT (on methodology, materials design, curriculum development, teacher education, etc.) in relation to the needs of local contexts (this volume, p. 5), it is important to clarify that the needs of the local contexts are those that are locally determined. Fitting into the frames of decentring ELT, the Cameroon English Language and Literature Teachers' Association (CAMELTA) Research Group members identified serious local classroom challenges amongst which low learner motivation and paucity of learning materials were crucial. As part of their continuing commitment to finding local solutions to their classroom challenges, they decided to create locally-relevant worksheets that reflect the learners' social world and learning experience. This earned them funding from the Hornby Trust Teacher Association Project Scheme to help them realize the project. This chapter details and knowledges the experience as it unfolded.

Creating context-relevant EFL worksheets for Cameroon secondary schools

The conceptual phase

The conceptual phase consisted of two major elements: understanding the curriculum; and recollecting ideas on the categories of actions learners at the target learning levels would possibly do, so as to develop an appropriate framework for creating the worksheets.

Analysing and understanding the curriculum

The school curriculum for the first three years of secondary school was analysed offline by the participants, following some guiding questions. The guiding questions were intended to orientate their sense of analysis towards the structure and contents of the syllabus. In an online meeting, they shared ideas from their analysis on the group WhatsApp platform. The intention here was for teachers to acquaint themselves with the curriculum, which they too often see as complicated and not worth looking at. In a second WhatsApp meeting, the curriculum was discussed independently of learners before brainstorming on challenges the learners face interacting in their social environments in a separate meeting. In the online discussions, questions to elicit ideas from participants were horizontally constructed to generate interactive discussions. They often were indirect, supported with suggestions to create a safe space for mutual exchange of ideas and preclude any form of suspicion of judgment. The interaction on the forum was later coded, reported on and sent back to teachers on the platform to see if it was consistent with their thinking and discussion during the meeting. Below is an example of coding of ideas from the meeting.

The first task was for participants to suggest aspects of language that learners may require to accomplish the categories provided in the previous meeting. The ideas generated in the discussions were summarized as follows:

Theme	Indicators
Language system	Simple present tense/question formation/modals/auxiliary verbs; vocabulary
Language functions	Introductions, politeness; instructions; asking for directions; asking about others, places, complaints

The discussion was further orientated towards activities pre-adolescent learners are most likely to be doing. The ideas generated through brainstorming are summarized below:

Theme	Indicators
Life actions	Describing people; doing house chores/the washing up; making new friends, shopping, completing forms, worshiping and praying, playing, sleeping, watching TV

In a third task, participants were asked to provide ideas related to places where the target learners are most likely to visit and who they are most likely to interact with in such places. The ideas generated are summarized below:

Theme	Indicators
Potential areas for action	Toilet, classroom, office, infirmary, staffroom, dining shed, kitchen, bedroom, living room
People learners are most likely to meet	Teachers, traders, friends

In a final activity, participants were required to suggest the kinds of attitudes learners would be expected to cultivate as humans in society. Suggestions provided are summarized below:

Theme	Indicators
Attitudes necessary to build in learners	Politeness, open-mindedness, inquisitiveness, critical thinking, team spirit/collaboration, generosity, respect, sincerity & honesty, self-esteem, self-awareness, awareness of environment

Developing a framework for creating the worksheets

In another WhatsApp meeting, teachers were guided to identify possible classroom solutions to the problems identified in the previous meeting, placing the learners at the centre of the suggestions. The

discussions made no conscious reference to the curriculum. In other words, no attempt was made to refer to any aspect of the ideas generated from the curriculum, which participants had earlier on assessed with the learners' activities in the social world. The discussions were again coded, reported on and provided to them for their assessment. A framework task based on the coding from the two interactive discussions was provided for participants to key in details from the coding into a table reflecting the various language (sub) skills to be developed. See figure below:

CAMELTA Research Group

Framework Task for developing worksheets for beginning EFL secondary school learners

Complete the table following the instructions provided.

Below is a summary of all the brainstorming from our two meetings. Select elements from the box that fit in each of the columns in the table. You may add more as you deem necessary.

i.e. Introductions, politeness;

instructions;

asking for directions;

asking about others, places, complaints;

describing people;

doing house chores/the washing up;

making new friends, shopping, completing forms, worshipping and praying, playing, sleeping, watching TV;

toilet, classroom, office, infirmary, staffroom, dining shed, kitchen, bedroom, living room;

teachers, traders, friends, politeness, open-mindedness, inquisitiveness, critical thinking, team spirit/collaboration, generosity, respect, sincerity & honesty, self-esteem, self-awareness, awareness of environment;

developing the 'self' to interact with other learners;

greetings;

saying thank you or bye;

introducing oneself;

introducing a friend, classmate;

talking about one's family members;

name titles;

exchanging personal information: name, age, nationality;

talking about close family members and extended family members;

asking for and giving directions, etc.

NB: *You must not complete each column as some activities overlap. E.g. activities for picture analysis can overlap into writing and reading, etc. We're going creative, as we're looking at local life in 'Our Environment'. Do not forget worksheets are activity-based and mostly build on the local experience of the learners especially in the case of young learners.*

Everyday engagements in the environment	Topic	Spoken and written expressions	Reading	Listening	Game/puzzle or class activity
Shopping	At the (Mokolo) market	How much? 2 litres of… etc.	Short texts on different commodities sold in various places and in different markets accompanied with pictures *(note that this could also be pictures/ drawings)*	Listen to a 'buyam-sellam': communicative event between a buyer and seller *(Main product here is to have a complete bidding discussion cut into pieces for a member in each group of learners to read aloud to other members of the group who listen to identify where that fits in a real time market scenario)*	Where to get it: *Here, I will get multiple pictures of small sizes of different elements sold in our local markets; Get bigger sizes flash cards carrying the labels 'cold store, clothes shop, grocery, butcher'; group the learners and ask them to pick each picture from a bundle and decide where to place it. In groups they decide which is correct*

Coding from CAMELTA Research Group online meeting into a framework task

The framework described above was intended to give participants a sense of direction while they were creating the worksheets.

Creating the worksheets proper

A new calendar of work (see below) was created to enable participants to take active responsibility for completing the work agreed to be done.

CAMELTA RESEARCH GROUP MEETING

A brief meeting was held on 7 February to read and endorse the proposed calendar of activities in preparation of the subsequent CAMELTA workshops/seminars and the grand conference with Hornby. The new information brought up during this meeting is recapitulated in the table below.

Item	Task	Rationale	Date	Concern
F2F	Pool leaders schedule and work in their respective pools; complete the form given to them; think of ice breakers we can use at different levels.	inclusive and use of graphics	any day between 8 and 13 February	pool leaders

Online meeting	presentation of tasks completed by the different pools	feedback on how members are faring with the tasks and what they made of the task	14 February	everyone
F2F	assembling the works presented online	to see if feedback from the online meeting was productive	27 February	everyone
Schools	trial in school	to enable participants to test the responsiveness to tasks in various classes	1–6 March	everyone
F2F	harmonisation of the work	to study the feedback from trial in schools	13 March	everyone
Conference	showcasing our project	to let other teachers appreciate what we have been doing	3 April	everyone

NB: May – a grand virtual conference with Hornby; produce a bank of ice breakers

New calendar of work for competing the worksheets

The first set of worksheets was created, and, in a F2F meeting, they were analysed to verify how appropriate they were through mutual support and feedback. The following checklist was used for this assessment:

Checklist for the CAMELTA Research Group worksheet project

1. Is there something holistic the learners can do upon completion of a task or sequence of tasks? What is it?
2. Do tasks link or provide a basis for the next tasks or build from previous ones?
3. Are grammar and vocabulary treated as a means to an end or for their own sake?
4. Do the tasks meet curriculum requirements?
5. Are the tasks at the right level of learning for the learners?
6. Is there an intensive relationship between the tasks and graphics?
7. Are the graphics clear enough to be accessed by the learners?
8. Are the instructions for each task clearly written?
9. Do the graphics reflect the social worlds of the learners?

10. Do the tasks require creativity or simple regurgitation of knowledge?

11. Are all the language skills and sub-skills equitably handled?

Management

1. Are the pages all numbered?

2. Are the levels/classes specified?

3. Are the modules for each tasks clearly stated?

4. Have the tasks been grouped to build specific competences?
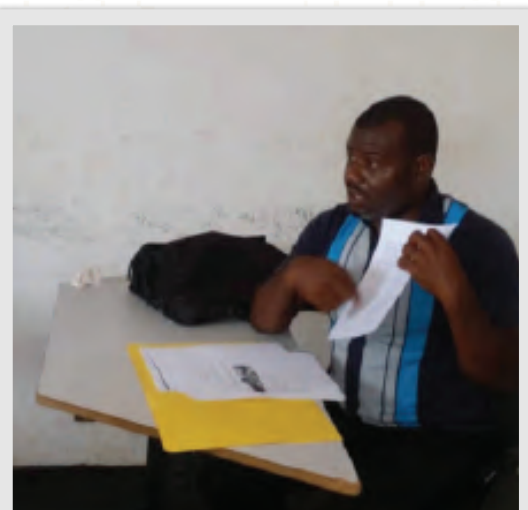
Reviewing the first worksheet samples

From the first samples, it was noticed that members generally downloaded pictures from Facebook to use as reflective/illustrative graphics. To sort this out, it was agreed that local pictures reflecting the kind of things students commonly do should be used. Another serious issue that needed attention was the quality of tasks. Most of the tasks were recall and not production activities and members agreed to revise the tasks to ensure they were productive. In total, 57 worksheets were created on varied topics reflecting the contents of Module 1 of Grades 7, 8 and 9 syllabuses. Given that they were created based on the same framework, most of them were quite similar in terms of content and language, so pool leaders agreed to revise them following the recommendations agreed upon. The guidelines for revising the worksheets were as follows:

▶ *They were authentic (we described authenticity to mean materials that reflected the normal social lives of the learners).*

▶ *They reflected the right level of the learners.*

▶ *They reflected the target module.*

▶ *They reflected the real life situations in the module.*

▶ *Learners could access them independently of the teacher.*

The Doula Pool working on their worksheets

Trial phase

The 57 worksheets produced were reviewed and members agreed to individually try them in their respective classes to determine how responsive the students were. Copies of all the worksheets were made available to all participating members for this phase of the task. The purpose was to allow participating members to assess the content and nature of the tasks in the worksheets. Upon trial, members agreed to share their experiences in a local hybrid meeting. This generated a lot of interaction (with feedback) from teachers teaching the target classes. An online international conference was scheduled to create space for members to share their experiences in the trial phase of the project as well as the entire project. This was made open specifically to other Hornby Teacher Association Project Scheme awardees from India, Argentina, Iraq, and Brazil, who gave some positive feedback.

Structuring Phase

The final phase of the project was to select and structure the worksheets into usable formats. Pool leaders agreed to meet and structure the worksheets following the guides below:

- Ten worksheets with varied tasks per module for all the classes;

- Each unit in the module carries three worksheets with the heavier one having four worksheets;

- All the real life situations in the syllabuses to be represented;

- All worksheets to be numbered following the real life situations described in the module.

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What did the project mean?

Pool leaders were given a report form to fill in upon completion of the revision process, and through the various reports submitted a number of interesting remarks came up. One of the most important aspects was the learning opportunity the project offered, as tasks for pool members were developed based on emerging experiences and challenges. At the start of the project, barely 10 to 20 per cent of participating teachers had any idea of what a worksheet is. By the close of the project, they could analyse a worksheet, bringing out its strengths and weakness in keeping with the realities of the Cameroonian classroom. Most of the tasks in the draft worksheets were recall tasks, and through collective assessment and peer feedback, participants were able to review the tasks to contain production activities. Given the increasing size of the group, a consensus was reached to work in pools (local centres) to be able to mitigate the effects of Covid-19. This turned out to be a big benefit as pools were able to work autonomously following the framework provided. From a group perspective, the process kept participants committed not necessarily because they felt the need to belong to our TA, but because they created the materials and were excited to share experience on how useful their materials were during meetings. Disseminating knowledge gained in the process attracted many other teachers to join the scheme mid-way. Two new pools emerged: one very active pool in the economic capital of Cameroon, the Littoral Region (Douala); and another in the Far North of Cameroon. While the process of creating the worksheets generated agency in CAMELTA Research Group, the project itself created a huge sensation in the wider CAMELTA structure as many members decided to join the Research Group. The excerpts below from the pool reports bear testimony to the invaluable impact of the project:

> ▶ *'We found the work interesting and challenging and we enjoyed those moments we had to brainstorm to come up with a sentence, a question, or an answer. It's unfortunate that we could not include other colleagues who desired to be part of the research group…I think we can have more pools in Douala, making sure that teachers do not travel to come together. Not only do we need pools in Douala, we also want them larger.'*

> ▶ *'We found the worksheet project very relevant in the context of Cameroon as many students can't afford official textbooks. Besides, some of the official textbooks don't focus on the local context, making learning very far-fetched.'*

One of the most interesting things learnt was to avoid being mechanical in TA projects. Working with teachers organically, building further actions on existing constraints and opportunities proved to be very productive in fostering agency. Another significant learning opportunity that emerged from this project was the development participants experienced during the project. Commitment to the project was driven by participants' sense of completing tasks generated from their actions rather than the need to belong to the TA. The power of dissemination was likewise uncovered: participants attested they felt different exchanging ideas with other (local and international) peers. It was equally realized that allowing teachers to create their local centres and work with their peers based on social and

proximity bonding increased their sense of autonomy although that came with increased cost, i.e. more work for the project leader.

What is decentring here?

The idea of reflecting, brainstorming and sharing ideas on what constitutes learners' social problems; examining the problems in the light of the curriculum; and factoring those problems into supplementary learning materials for learners helps to develop teachers' abilities to reconceptualize and contextualize teaching, and this, done in collegiality, can foster decentring in thinking and acting to the extent of creating new teacher identities. It tells a story of a community of practitioners who are conversant with the workings of the work contexts and making decisions based on this. This supposes that better ways of understanding decentring practices have to be consistent with the thinking of a given community of practitioners appropriately acting in culturally responsive ways – what is described as 'insider's experience' (this volume, p. 5). What this practically means is trusting expertise judgments of what is locally relevant to local practitioners. Although learning materials in Cameroon are currently locally developed, there is evidence that the ideologies in the course materials are centre-driven (see the second quote from pool feedback cited above). This is because the developers of such materials were trained in schools that based training on Northern experiences. Acting in ways that reflect their collective thinking and experiences not only legitimizes the argument for their actions but adds credibility to such actions. The power of achieving credibility in teachers' work and actions is both decentring and decolonizing, at least for teachers who initially think of themselves as 'common teachers'.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to attempt sense from domestic ELT practices in Cameroon that fit within the characterization of 'decentring ELT'. An illustrative practice with participant voices in a domestic project was examined to analyse features of decentring from them. A major underlying aspect of decentring is noticed to be the power of processes over results. The process of conceiving worksheets with teachers having no prior knowledge of worksheets to a point where they are able to assess their relevance with respect to their local realities has the potential of decolonizing the mind in ways that are realistically productive and sustainable. Another essential characteristic of decentring as observed in the local project is dissemination. Knowledge generated, but not shared, easily gets diffused into local traditions. When it is shared, it empowers teachers whose identities have been submerged by hegemonic structures and opens possibilities for local centres to be created. Given the understanding of the productive nature of the process it is necessary to extend such an initiative to further uncover its transformative potentials. It is equally necessary to probe, collect, and knowledge practices of decentring ELT that may occur as unplanned responses to local challenges in the classroom to uncover further axes of theorizing on decentring.

RICELT infographics: accessible and situated ELT research

Gloria Romero & Paula Rebolledo *RICELT*

RICELT (Red de Investigacion Chilena en ELT) is an inclusive network formed by pre- and in-service school teachers, academics and researchers from Chile who have conducted or are currently conducting local research in ELT. RICELT seeks to bridge the gap between theory and practice while promoting ELT informed by research and connecting the Chilean ELT community. The network is coordinated by a central committee – located in Chile, the UK and the US – that organises different local knowledge mobilization initiatives (conference organization, updates on recent local ELT research, etc.). After eight years, RICELT has 600 registered members and more than 1,398 followers on Facebook and 557 on Twitter.

The Infographics project was an idea that we had been discussing and nurturing for around five years and which eventually materialized thanks to a Hornby Trust grant.

Background

A study conducted in 2019 that surveyed 1,300 educators in the US revealed that 9 out of 10 teachers access educational research. However, only 16% use it to inform classroom practices and instruction.[1] Even though educators can access a wide range of research studies from journal articles, conferences or newspaper articles, they tend to choose research that is applicable to the context in which they work. They seem to do so since academic research is believed to be critical to keeping teachers informed and helping them make evidence-informed teaching decisions. However, there is a tremendous gap between what research offers and how that can be transferred into concrete teaching ideas and strategies they can use in the classroom to improve students' learning. In the case of Chile, teachers primarily access research through conference attendance, where research is not necessarily presented in easily understandable nor contextually situated ways. Indeed, it is unknown how much of that research is meaningful and practical to inform their teaching. Due to the social, educational and detrimental working conditions of Chilean EFL teachers, they rarely have the time nor the financial means to 'consume', critically analyse and implement research in their language classrooms.

With this in mind, we drew upon Kumaravadivelu's (2008)[2] notions of practicality and particularity (i.e. the relationship between theory and practical knowledge; teacher-generated theory of practice; uniqueness of learning teaching contexts, and their connection to applied teaching methods) to bring ELT research into Chilean EFL teachers' classrooms through our Infographics project. Therefore, this project serves as a bridge to provide teacher-members of RICELT access to cutting-edge international ELT research that would be critically considered in the light of Chilean classroom realities and contextualized for the Chilean language classroom setting. In this way, research will become more accessible and context-bound to the local Chilean classroom.

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1 Jefferson Evidence Exchange. (2019, November 20). Most teachers access academic research, but few use it to inform practice, new evidence finds.

2 Kumaravadivelu, B. (2006) *Understanding Language Teaching.* Lawrence Erlbaum.

Connecting theory, practice and a diverse community

This project sought to connect three key members of the RICELT community: school teachers, student teachers and researchers. Through joint partnership and collaboration, all these members created five digital infographics that visually represent and link research and classroom knowledge. School teachers provided classroom knowledge developed by their experience and work in their classrooms. This was critical to helping contextualize and bring research into the hands of local ELT educators. Student teachers joined the group with the aim of having a fresh look into ELT. They also provided their experience gathered through their teaching placements. Finally, university-based teacher educators collaborated with their experience in examining research, identifying key issues in ELT, and proposing literature related to the topics selected for the infographics. Hence, this project contributes to promoting teachers' agency and empowerment to analyse and discuss international research with the ultimate goal of bringing it down to the local context and making it more relatable to the Chilean context. Thus, knowledge is democratized by being transformed into a tool of easy and familiar access with accessible language and contextualized to the local setting.

Infographics that connect theory and local ELT practices

A call was made seeking volunteers from the Chilean ELT community to participate in this project. Once this group of EFL teachers, student teachers and researchers was formed, they decided the topics they would like to work with and put them under the scrutiny of the wider ELT community. This raised the voices of the local ELT community by bringing to light their professional interests and contextual particularities. After consulting with the ELT community, the topics that caused greatest interest were:

- Working with special needs students in ELT (NEE)
- Social-emotional learning in ELT (SEL)
- Promoting communicative/speaking skills
- Raising critical thinking through ELT
- Learner engagement and/or motivation

Five teams were formed with volunteers who wished to participate in the project. Each team consisted of one pre-service teacher, two school teachers and two academics, and they were monitored by one RICELT central committee member who accompanied them and facilitated the process. The work entailed meeting weekly for one or two months, reading and analysing research articles related to the topics mentioned above, discussing in groups possible ways of making research relatable to the local context, summarizing articles, and relating the articles to the local reality of ELT teachers and students. After the discussion work was finalized, the teams met with the graphic designer hired for the project to work on the design of the infographics. The infographics were later shared with the wider ELT community via social media and RICELT's website.
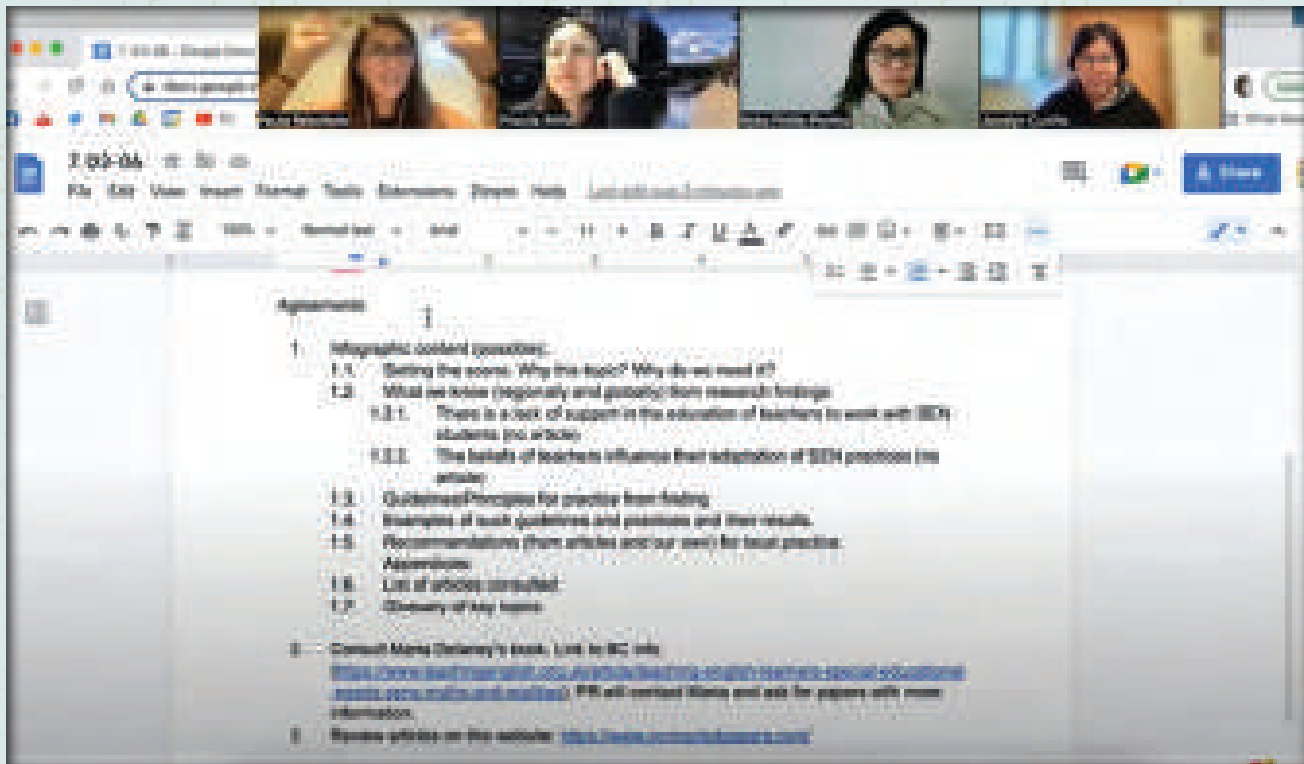
Benefits

The benefits of this project are twofold: (a) at a macro level, the digital visual representations will be open-access and shared with the ELT community, facilitating access to ELT research with the particularity of being context-bound and responsive to the uniqueness of the local educational setting; and (b) at a micro level, the collaborative work of the three key members of the RICELT community will develop empowerment via authorship and visibility.

TO INTERACT WITH THE GRAPHIC, CLICK ON THIS LINK:

https://www.ricelt.cl/1st-infographic-sens-in-the-english-language-classroom-inclusive-practice/
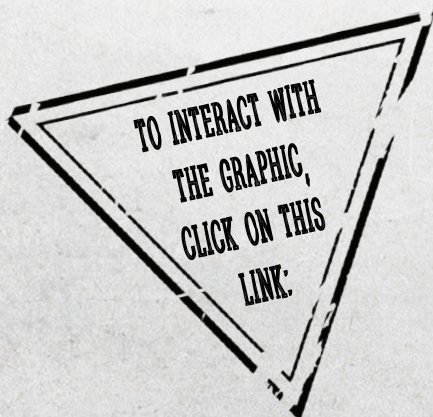
How is this a decentring initiative?

The idea of decentring ELT was present throughout the project. From its origin, design and implementation, the project sought to incorporate varied voices from the ELT community. As such, this initiative began with a bottom-up approach by receiving suggestions from the RICELT network members on the topics they considered relevant for the infographics to cover, rather than having a series of topics imposed by academics. Also, the rationale behind the formation of teams working on the infographics was based on equality: equal number of academics, school teachers and student teachers. This empowered all members to have a voice, develop a sense of agency, make valuable contributions and showcase their expertise on equal terms – no matter the professional background of the participants. In line with the idea that decentring happens at a 'local' level, school teachers had a leading role in bringing down to earth what international research reported on the selected topics. That is, the teachers' expertise was critical at the moment of contextualizing and localizing research findings to the reality of ELT in Chilean classrooms and making practical classroom suggestions.

What we have learned

As a research community, we have identified the great interest that the local ELT community has in exploring research studies from a perspective on the affordances and challenges of the Chilean classroom, decentring the access and comprehension to international research. We have also learned the importance of building sustainable relationships among the members of the local community who typically work within the boundaries of their current posts without engaging with other key players of the local education system. We have pushed these boundaries and showed that it is indeed possible to establish these professional communities that could work together for a better future. Our role in the development of these communities was confirmed as a facilitator that guided the process and promoted the participants' agency and voice to sustain the communities. Moreover, we observed an interesting evolution in the teams' thinking about research and its applicability and use to inform classroom practices, but most importantly we saw a mutual and sincere appreciation and recognition of the cultural and educational knowledge that all the members brought to the different discussions and stages in the process of creating the infographics. We also experienced progress in the members' motivation. Indeed, some members volunteered to work on more than one infographic.

The process was not free of challenges. Difficulties were present at two levels: logistics and roles. With regards to logistics, work overload, lack of time to meet regularly, hurdles in finding classroom teachers, and difficulties in initiating the project were present. In terms of roles, it was hard for some members to let go of their hierarchical mindsets to assume a more independent and proactive role. They expected the RICELT committee members who joined the groups and facilitated the projects to guide, instruct them, and take important decisions on their behalf. So they had to be regularly

reminded that the infographic project belonged to them, it was their creation and it would have their authorship. The highlights and challenges that we experienced during the development of this project were valuable and rich. They helped us to consider these aspects in future projects and anticipate the challenges that may emerge throughout the journey.

Moving forward

What we plan to do in the short term is to continue working on the dissemination of the infographics with the international ELT community as a way of showing the importance of decentring not only the generation of knowledge (i.e. through research articles) but also the implications of research from a local perspective. In the long term, we expect to continue working on spreading and supporting local and international ELT research.

AINET Connect: stronger networking for stronger teacher association

Vivek Joshi, Nadeem Khan & Milind Mane
AINET Association of English Teachers

This chapter reports on the role of English language teachers in the growth of AINET Association of English Teachers, India, and teachers' own growth as social media managers. This is an inspiring journey of how teachers took up roles as social media managers and carried out different face-to-face, virtual and live online activities to reach out to teachers and students. The project was an attempt to mitigate existing gaps in practising teachers' management, organization, governance and social media skills.

Introduction

Most TAs, including AINET, are often found not to work with vision, strategic planning and systematic processes to derive maximum impact and benefit from social media. In other words, while TAs like AINET have accounts on social media, they are not backed by a planned and purposeful approach to exploiting their fullest potential. Against this backdrop, we submitted a proposal to the Hornby Trust for a TA project award to fund the AINET Connect project with the aim of consolidating AINET's reach and impact by building stronger and more sustainably managed channels of communication, especially on social media platforms. AINET was also interested in developing a media policy, media coordinators from teacher-members, a range of activities and ways of delivering them.

Objectives

The objectives of the project were to:

- identify, train and orientate a team of teacher-volunteers as media and communications coordinators;

- set up a Facebook account, attract at least 2,000 followers and organize at least six professional development (PD) activities;

- set up a Twitter account, attract at least 1,000 followers and organize at least six PD activities;

- create an AINET YouTube channel to attract at least 500 subscribers, upload content and promote dissemination and communication;

- launch 10 WhatsApp groups for effective communication with members;

- revamp the AINET website, thereby increasing interactivity through e-newsletters and blogs, etc., creating events and resources archives, adding member-generated content, and interlinking with other social media channels;

- develop a draft media and communications policy for AINET and derive key insights, learning and issues in handling media and communications.

Project activities

The project was conceptualized by AINET's Executive Committee, which felt the pressing need to manage AINET's social media presence more effectively and productively. A three-member project team with Vivek Joshi as project lead and Milind Mane and Nadeem Khan as team members was formed to plan and implement the project. The first task was to recruit member-volunteers to work as 'AINET Connect Associates'. An open call for expressions of interest was circulated, which generated a good response. Finally, 14 teachers were selected from a shortlist of 20 via telephone interviews. The first orientation workshop of these 14 'AINET Connect Associates' was held in Nagpur on 16–17 November 2019, during which the Associates were introduced to the basics of social media management, the project plans and AINET's expectations from its media accounts. Following this, the group divided itself into small sub-teams, each taking responsibility for one social media account.

Over the next few months, the Associates organized a variety of online PD activities aligned to their respective social media platforms. They also activated and promoted various AINET media accounts and undertook initiatives to increase their reach and following. They played a particularly vital role during the 5th AINET International Conference in Hyderabad (January 2020) through such activities as: livestreaming several conference sessions; telecasting interviews with the guest speakers, presenters and delegates; promoting discussions on social media; and creating ways for those who could not attend the event to interact. Last but not the least, the Associates and the project team worked together to create valuable documents such as a privacy policy, the AINET media policy and guidelines for the management of different social media platforms.

The evaluation and the impact

The impact and gains for our Association can be found in the establishment of a media coordinators' team from our teacher-members. Dedicated teams look after various social media accounts, and this has resulted in a massive increase in presence and reach of AINET on multiple social media platforms. Substantial capacity development of our Association in terms of human resources, relevant skills and knowledge, and setting up policies, processes and mechanisms is another important aspect of this endeavour. Multiple interactive communication channels with members and non-members have led to considerable increase in the visibility, access and brand image of the Association. Successful tapping

of the expertise and talent available within the Association membership aimed at the creation of middle-level leadership roles, and the potential avenue to groom a second line of leadership has made AINET work more diverse and inclusive in terms of geography, socio-economic context and gender.

The visible gains and impact on the wider community are in terms of a variety of professional development (PD) and capacity building activities for teachers. Tagged as 'AINET Connect initiatives', the facilitation includes: support to teacher communities and groups to organize their own activities, especially in the challenging pandemic times; networking opportunities across the country and globally; the development of resources and tools; and pooling of trained people in a collective effort to cope with the challenging shift to online work due to the pandemic.

Collaborations with other TAs and groups for mutual benefit and for the benefit of the ELT community have also been undertaken, for example, MNET, Mumbai and POET, West Bengal conducted about 70 webinars over six months with AINET Connect support. The project turned out to be the space for teachers to hone their skills as media coordinators, content creators, webinar presenters, tech support and event managers.

PLATFORM	Before AINET-Connect	Aim	After AINET-Connect
FACEBOOK	500 Followers	2000 Followers	4594 Followers
TWITTER	27 Followers	3000 Followers	426 Followers
YOUTUBE	0 Subscribers	500 Subscribers	476 Subscribers
INSTAGRAM	0 Followers	Not specified	220 Followers
WHATSAPP	2 Group	10 Groups	10 Groups

Project Achievements in Numbers

ainet

The decentring dimension

Teachers are usually seen as 'just teachers' and are not expected to venture beyond their teaching work. In their institutions or communities, such as TAs, teachers are often seen as unable to contribute to fields other than teaching. Even if many teachers demonstrate tech-savvy and media-savvy behaviour in their personal lives, they are not called upon to contribute in such a manner in their professional work. With this project, going against the usual instinct of hiring professional service providers, AINET decided to work with teachers with enough skills and interest to manage the entire work. It was not only a recognition and promotion of teachers' own expertise of a different kind, it was also a way of offering them an opportunity to develop different skills, e.g. in media policy, social media management, cross-platform coordination, leadership and communication. In other words, the project valued and used local expertise, as well as tried to expand it further. AINET was also trying to break the convention followed in most Indian TAs of outsourcing media and technical services to professional providers.

What we have learned

It was a great learning experience not just for the AINET Connect Associates but for the project team and the AINET Executive Committee as well. The key learnings include the unprecedented upsets and disruptions to the plan and understanding the importance of contingency plans from the very beginning. The pandemic norms forced the project team to adapt a lot of their original plans and abandon others; this was an important lesson in project planning. We also gained insight into team working as a key to success – individual commitment matters a lot in any group work. Additionally,

we recognized the importance of different stages in the planning and execution of an event, and the significance of having a 'plan B' when dealing with technology, communications, timely dissemination of information, post-activity debriefing and keeping notes and records. Realization of the value of promoting diversity and inclusion, e.g. gender balance or Indian vs overseas speakers in social media events, was a vital addition to the learning.

An important point of learning was a richer understanding of the vast skills and talent, as well as energy and enthusiasm, among teachers and AINET members that was manifested by the way the Associates devoted themselves to their roles. This was an emerging key strength of AINET. Another learning was an increased awareness of the popularity of various social media, the huge spread of smartphones and a generally positive attitude towards the use of social media, which added value to the AINET Connect work. However, looking ahead, a key challenge is to use these productively and purposefully to everyone's benefit. Another challenge is the large number of teachers (including AINET members) absent from social media for various reasons. How to bring more of these onto social media and engage them in PD activities is an important question we would like to address in the future.

AINET Connect Associates on completion of the first capacity building workshop at Nagpur

Moving forward

AINET proposes to go further with the next version of this project, AINET Connect 2.0. This follow-up would involve creating and sharing a pool of resources and guidelines for managing social media platforms with a wider audience, which would include: awareness of related legal and ethical issues; expansion of the media teams, i.e. adding more platforms and more teacher-volunteers; and exploring and building pathways for the current Associates for further growth and other roles within the AINET

organizational structure. We also look forward to collaborating with other TAs for capacity building and networking activities to ensure a wider participatory management of AINET activities and to build on the expertise available within AINET.

AINET links

AINET (@ainetindia) Twitter. https://twitter.com/ainetindia

AINET Association of English Teachers Facebook.
https://www.facebook.com/ainetindia/

AINET Connect Associates Videos, Google Drive.
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1KkyxK_qZQqWStzloUiQG60nR_fjMB0xK

AINET India YouTube.
https://www.youtube.com/c/AINETIndia

Expectations from the participants

SCAN THE QR CODE TO WATCH VIDEOS OF SOME AINET CONNECT ASSOCIATES DISCUSSING THEIR EXPECTATIONS FROM THE PROJECT.

AINET gateways

SCAN THE QR CODE TO CONNECT TO ALL SOCIAL MEDIA HANDLES AND THE AINET ASSOCIATION OF ENGLISH TEACHERS WEBSITE.

Sharing success stories: an enhancement approach to teacher development

Sagun Shrestha *NELTA*

Background

Sharing success stories in teaching and learning contexts in general means sharing successful 'teaching strategies that teachers have implemented in their classrooms, the new techniques that they have devised and explored, and the teaching tips that they have experimented and found effective'.[1] Success stories can comprise any successful project(s) that teachers have carried out for teaching and learning or classroom management strategies that they have successfully handled. Sharing success stories in teacher development values the strengths of teachers, and builds on those strengths to better the teachers' professional engagement. Shrestha et al. (2022) contend:

> As the local context is very important, it may be a good idea to value their [teachers'] successes or strengths by making them share their stories and learn from each other. In other words, their context sensitive sharing can be termed as an enhancement approach that focuses on building on teachers' own strengths to enhance their professional engagement. We claim that the enhancement approach to teacher development is more effective than an expert-driven approach because this approach emphasises teachers' strengths more than their problems to uplift their teaching-learning activities (Shrestha et al., 2022, p. 2).[2]

The source of the sharing success story model

In 2013, during a five-day Hornby Regional Workshop facilitated by Richard Smith and Amol Padwad in Kathmandu on 'Teaching in low-resource classrooms', I became acquainted with this unique model. During the workshop, we were invited to recall a story related to our successes that was achieved in our classroom, and share it informally in small groups. Next, we were asked to share the story in a different group of three. And at the end, we were asked to share our story with a different partner. This final sharing made us extend the success stories we had shared with our friends earlier. To that end, we made our stories more specific and comprehensible (see also Shrestha, 2019). I was

1   Shrestha, S. (2019). A success story conference: what, why and how? *English Language Teacher Education and Development (ELTED) Journal, 22*, 60–65.

2   Shrestha, S., Dawadi, S., Haque, H., & Giri, R. A. (2022). Enhancement approach to teacher development and teachers' success stories. In R. A. Giri, S. Dawadi, S. Shrestha, & S. Haque (Eds.), *Enhancement Approach: Success Stories of EFL Teachers from Bangladesh and Nepal* (pp. 1–12). NELTA and BELTA.

impressed by this unique model of teacher development, which values teachers' strengths by making teacher participants appreciate each other's successful classroom teaching and learning experiences and builds on the successes which are context-sensitive, as they are ones shared by the community of teachers who share similar contexts. I realized that it could become an effective teacher development model, thus, I planned to use it wherever appropriate.

Hornby Regional Workshop on 'Teaching in low-resource classrooms', Kathmandu, 2013
(Source: https://richardsmithelt.wordpress.com/2019/11/16/sharing-success-stories-an-enhancement-approach-for-low-resource-challenging-contexts/)

Taking sharing success stories further

Having realized its potential in teacher development programmes, in the beginning, I along with NELTA (Nepal English Language Teachers' Association) colleagues embedded it in a teacher training organised by NELTA in Kathmandu, the capital city, and Morang, the far eastern region in Nepal. What I observed then was that participants enjoyed sharing success stories as we did in our workshop. Also, sharing success stories became a unique session compared to a classical teacher training session, in which a teacher trainer, considered hierarchically superior and possessing a set of ideas, delivers their knowledge to teacher participants with the expectation that such knowledge will then be put into practice. Such knowledge might not always be tailored to teacher participants' needs, and as a result may not always be appropriate to teacher participants' local contexts.

Teacher training organised by NELTA in Sunsari (Source: the author's social networking site)

Beyond teacher training, we expanded sharing success stories and proposed a special session 'NELTA ELT Clinic' at the 21st International NELTA Conference. A large number of participants (around 50) attended the clinic, talked about their successes and explored solutions to their problems with one another. We brought a little twist to the original model of sharing success stories in the clinic.

First, we asked the teachers to state their problems at the very beginning, and then identify which of the success stories their friends had shared with them could possibly address their problems. In the original sharing success story model, we did not begin with problems and/or puzzles: while sharing success stories, the participants might articulate problems and puzzles, but problems were not explicitly highlighted as they were during the clinic. Secondly, during the clinic, we also invited some guest experts who attended the conference to share their opinions after teachers had shared their problems and success stories.

'NELTA ELT Clinic' at the 21st International NELTA Conference (Source: https://neltaeltforum.wordpress.com/2016/05/17/1053/)

As the response was overwhelmingly positive, I along with my colleagues at LRI School, Kathmandu, Nepal, where I was working as an academic coordinator, thought of structuring the success story model as a success story conference. We organised the 1st Success Story Conference at LRI School. It was a very distinctive event as it was the first ever conference of its kind (see Shrestha, 2019). LRI School went on to organise a second success story conference in 2019 and a success story online colloquium of teachers during the pandemic in 2020.

The 1st Success Story Conference of teachers at LRI School, Nepal (Source: LRI School, Kathmandu, Nepal)

A teacher presenting at the 1st Success Story Conference (Source: LRI School, Kathmandu, Nepal)

The 2nd Success Story Conference (Source: LRI School, Kathmandu, Nepal)

More recently, in 2021, Saraswati Dawadi, Ram Ashish Giri, Saifa Haque and I organised a bi-national success story forum online, taking the success story approach beyond Nepal and collaborating with Bangladesh English Language Teachers' Association (BELTA). It was funded by the A.S. Hornby Educational Trust. Having made a call for presentations, we asked interested teachers to develop a proposal guided by the following questions for a 20-minute session to share their success stories in the Forum:

1. What went well related to your teaching and learning?

2. What did you do categorically to achieve your success?

3. What were the signs of success?

4. Do you have any plan to build on or extend this success?

We received 21 proposals (13 from Nepal and 8 from Bangladesh) from 24 EFL teachers, out of which two were for joint presentations. All proposals were reviewed by the facilitators, and many teachers were asked to make revisions based on the comments we provided. To organize their success stories under common themes and to run virtual sessions, we developed five different themes: Communication Skills, Technology in Teaching and Learning, Writing Skills, Technology and/or Classroom Activities, and Drive for Success.

Followed by an orientation programme, on different dates between April and June 2021, we organized five sharing sessions including Nepali and Bangladeshi speakers in each session. Many teacher participants also chaired their colleagues' sessions; thus, on the one hand, it was a learning experience for many on how to chair a conference session, and on the other hand, it helped them to realize horizontal roles and relationships as their own colleagues were chairing their sessions. Each individual presentation was 20 minutes followed by a ten-minute Q&A session. Prior to the project, we had developed our website (www.successstoryforum.wordpress.com) and we continually uploaded presentation slides and recordings of the sessions there. Anyone who would like to learn more about the Success Story Forum can visit the website.

A screenshot of the webpage www.successstoryforum.wordpress.com

Events	Presentation topics	Presenters	Themes	Date
First sharing session	Adda in English (AIE) – Group Adda and One-on-one Adda	Amin Rahman Fatema Farid A. K M Sharif Ull Islam (Bangladesh)	Communication Skills	Saturday, April 10, 2021 Time: 2 pm – 4 pm Nepal, 2.15 – 4 15 pm Bangladesh
	Celebrating Students' Success in Mass Facing Skills	Pushpa Priya (Nepal)		
	Aiming for Technological Pedagogical Knowledge: Diving in and out	Rezwana Islam (Bangladesh)	Technology in teaching and learning	
	Practices of Online and Alternative Pedagogy: A case of Mid-Western University during COVID-19 Pandemic	Bishnu Kumar Khadaka (Nepal)		
Second sharing session	Improving Writing Skills	Gopal Prasad Bashyal (Nepal)	Writing Skills	Saturday, April 24, 2021 Time: 2 pm – 4 pm Nepal, 2.15 –
	Teaching Communication by Learning by Doing	Bibha Jha (Nepal)	Communication Skills	
	Creative Writing through ICT	Dipak Prasad Mishra Surendra Prasad Bhatta (Nepal)	Writing Skills	

A sample outline of the programme schedule

The publication of a book that comprises the 17 success stories of teachers and teacher educators of Nepal and Bangladesh which were presented in the forum is another noteworthy extended initiative of the success story forum. It is intriguing to find that the majority of teachers who presented at the Forum submitted their success stories for the volume edited by success story forum facilitators, which is available to download from https://www.nelta.org.np/uploads/upload/LiVNpo.pdf
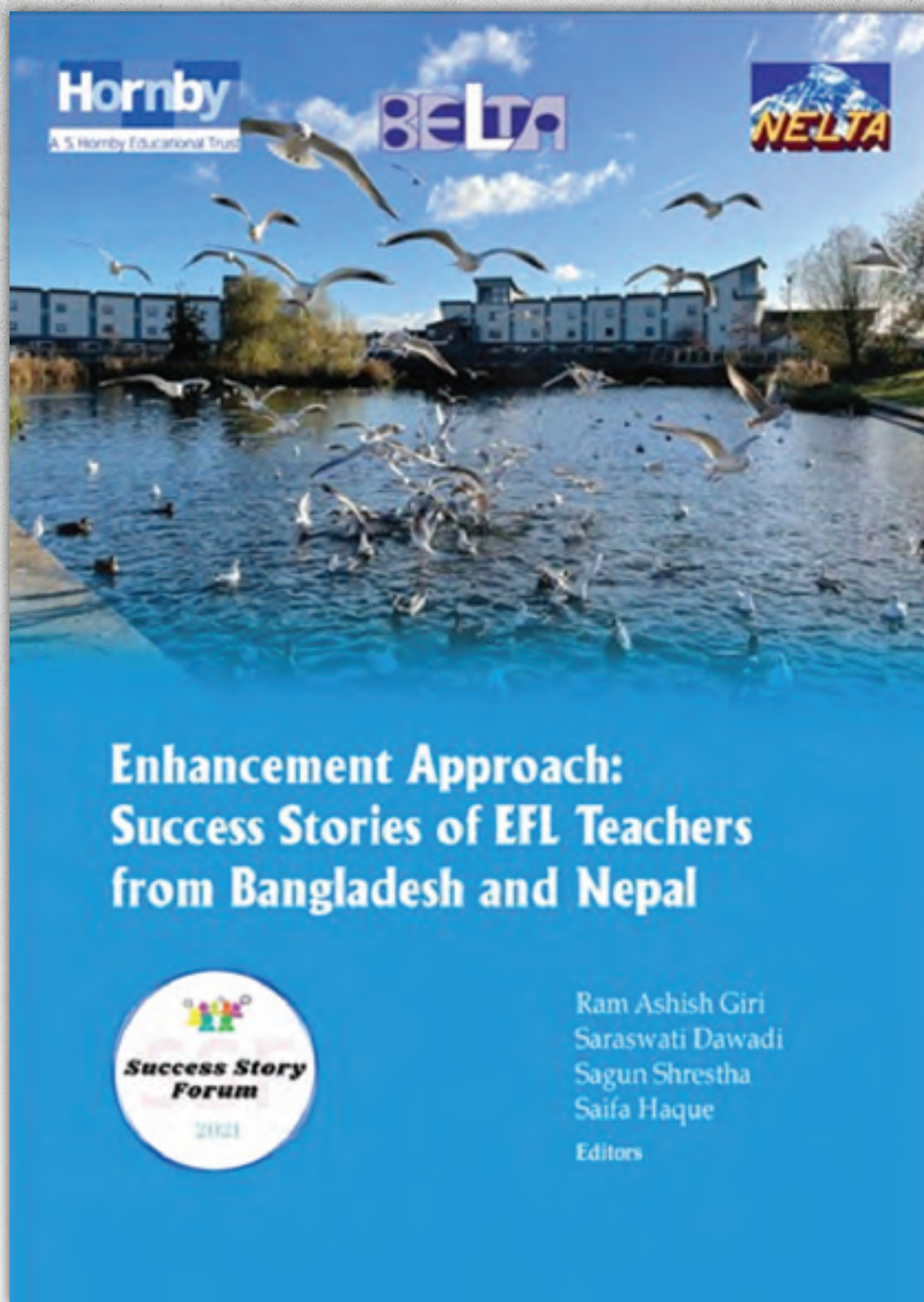
The book arising from the Success Story Forum

Benefits of the enhancement approach

There is a plethora of benefits of an enhancement approach based on sharing success stories. Firstly, it helps to create a platform for learning by building on teachers' successful experiences and their perspectives on those successes, and encouraging other colleagues to try out strategies they hear about, which are likely to be successful since those success stories come from contexts similar to those they are working in. Secondly, it places teachers, as opposed to teacher trainers, at the centre

and involves teachers in guiding each other. Thirdly, with this kind of teacher development model, the facilitators trigger teachers to share their success stories in a systematic and meaningful way, and they also help build rationale for success stories by replacing the idea that good ideas have to come from outside. Fourth, as teachers value and celebrate their own successes, it assists them in establishing and expanding a wider community to support their own professional development. Fifth, it is a bottom-up initiative and context-sensitive approach because the stories shared with colleagues fit the teachers' local context (Smith & Shrestha, 2019).[3] The participant teachers can directly apply teaching strategies that their colleagues share with them or they can adapt those strategies so they are more suited to their context if they find them useful and of value.

A decentring initiative

The sharing success story model breaks the longstanding power relationship that exists in classical teacher development models. With this model, as the power of the teacher trainer shifts to teachers – who share their experiences with colleagues, value successes and learn from others' practices – the notion of centre dwindles. Instead, this model establishes horizontal roles and relationships that help teachers share their practices without fear of them being perceived as nonsense. Put simply, one aspect of decentring with this model is that all teachers are trainers, who enjoy more or less equal status and who share a common platform for enhancing their skills by learning from each other's initiatives. Another aspect of decentring is that the central role of the Teacher Association also shifts to teachers and/or its members as they can organize events very easily and without financial burden since they do not need to hire an expert trainer. At times, such events can also be organized in a semi-formal or informal way – teachers can organize sharing success stories in a way that suits their contexts. All of the above arguments illustrate how the sharing success story approach to teacher development is a decentring initiative.

Future implications

The sharing success story approach can be an effective teacher development model irrespective of region; it can be applied in both developing and developed country contexts. Moreover, since sharing success stories does not require the active role of a so-called expert trainer, this model incurs minimum costs. Thus, it can be organized by any group of teachers or institutions. It also has the potential to help motivate teachers in their profession and work with the resources available to them or within existing constraints as teachers working in difficult circumstances can learn from their own colleagues. Ultimately, this model helps to dismantle the hierarchical relationship that exists between colleagues with more or less experience or knowledge by creating an environment to celebrate successes and learn from each other's initiatives. However, rigorous evidence-based research on sharing success stories can inform strengths and constraints of this approach and look at this approach more critically so that the practitioners of this approach can understand both potential and challenges and adopt and/or adapt this model to their own context for better outcomes.

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[3] Smith, R. & Shrestha, S. (2019, November 10). Sharing success stories: An enhancement approach for low-resource/challenging contexts [Presentation]. The Future of Training Conference, IH London.

Following a pandemic hiatus, 2021 saw the finalization of an article for publication in *ELT Journal* (76/1) – 'Decentring ELT: Teacher Associations as agents of change' (freely downloadable) – in which we presented our provisional characterization of decentring ELT and reported on aspects of the initial consultation and some of the case studies which are reported on more fully above.

As a coordinating group (consisting, by this time, of Susan Maingay and Paula Rebolledo in addition to original members Darío Banegas, Richard Kiely, Harry Kuchah Kuchah, Amol Padwad, Richard Smith and Martin Wedell), we then, in December 2021, organized the 'Decentring ELT: Challenges and Opportunities' conference as a collaborative event with AINET Association of English Teachers and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar University Delhi. Originally intended to be held in Delhi, this was moved online due to ongoing Covid-19 travel restrictions. The aim of the conference was to further deepen understanding and spread awareness of the potential value of decentring ELT, at the same time as developing new perspectives in this area. Below is the final programme, with direct links to freely available video-recordings of conference sessions. The remaining chapters of this book report further on Day 2, which was explicitly intended to take the discussion of decentring further.

Decentring ELT: Challenges and Opportunities

The A. S. Hornby Educational Trust's 60th anniversary online conference, in collaboration with AINET and the Centre for English Language Education, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar University Delhi, 3–4 December 2021

Day 1 (3 December 2021)

Session 1: Welcome Amol Padwad and Richard Smith	
Session 2: Case Studies	Chaired by Darío Banegas
APIBA, Argentina CLASS, DR Congo	María Laura García (APIBA) and Joseph Kaleba (CLASS) reported on how their TAs are engaging members in localization/devolution activities.
AINET, India NELTA, Nepal	Krishna Kalyan Dixit (AINET) and Sagun Shrestha (NELTA) reported on how their TAs encourage members to share recent successes and/or engage in teacher-research.

Session 3: Case Studies	Chaired by Harry Kuchah Kuchah
CAMELTA, Cameroon RICELT, Chile	Ita Frinwie Ndifon (CAMELTA) and Gloria Romero (RICELT) reported on how their TAs are researching the needs and/or capabilities of their members.
FAAPI, Argentina ELTA-GB, Guinea Bissau	María Susana Ibáñez (FAAPI) and Ali Djau (ELTA-GB) reported on how their TA-led decentring initiatives have contributed to wider change.
Session 4: Discussion	Amol Padwad and Richard Smith shared reflections on the day's presentations.

Day 2 (4 December 2021)

Session 1: Panel discussion: 'Decentring ELT – wider perspectives'	
Panel members	Chaired by Paula Rebolledo and Amol Padwad

Hasna AbuMezied, Gaza-Palestine
Shreesh Chaudhary, India
Eric Enongene Ekembe, Cameroon
Grazzia María Mendoza Chirinos, Honduras
Prem Phyak, Nepal

Panel members and other participants shared their personal understandings of decentring ELT and discussed its relevance or otherwise to their own professional contexts. |
| Session 2: | Presentation and discussion of questionnaire responses from participants |
| Panel members | Chaired by Harry Kuchah Kuchah and Susan Maingay

Deborah Bullock, Richard Kiely, Amol Padwad
Richard Smith, Martin Wedell

Panel members reported on responses to a questionnaire completed by conference participants on Day 1. Responses centred on the relevance and influence of decentring in participants' contexts; reactions to issues and activities presented in the case studies and examples from their own contexts |
| Session 3: Round up, reflection and next steps | |

Amol Padwad, Richard Smith and Martin Wedell reflected on highlights and key themes of the conference and suggested possible ways of taking the Decentring ELT initiative forward.

Wider perspectives (panel discussion)

The Decentring ELT initiative had benefitted from a degree of wider consultation prior to the December 2021 conference, but it was also hoped that the conference would be a great opportunity to elicit a wider range of views, providing insights into how decentring might be more widely perceived. With this aim in mind, a panel discussion was organized on Day 2 of the conference on the theme 'Decentring ELT – wider perspectives'. Chaired by Paula Rebolledo and Amol Padwad, it included Shreesh Chaudhary (India), Eric Ekembe (Cameroon), Grazzia Mendoza (Honduras), Prem Phyak (Nepal) and Hasna AbuMezied (Gaza-Palestine) as panellists.

The panel discussion was an opportunity for the panellists and participants to share their personal understandings of decentring ELT and its relevance or otherwise to their own professional contexts. Some key themes emerging from the discussion (a full recording of which is available in Chapter 4 above) concerned: multiple and diverse understandings of the centre (and of decentring); insights relating to teacher development; and contextual (including political and ideological) features shaping centring or decentring.

Multiple and diverse understandings of the centre (and decentring)

The discussion began with a focus on the notion of decentring itself, with a general view emerging that, although formulating one comprehensive, widely applicable definition of decentring is difficult, it can be characterized as involving a focus on local solutions and attempts to counter discriminatory and/or hegemonic practices.

Diverse views and notions characterized the panellists' responses when they were asked to share their understandings of decentring. Grazzia Mendoza considered decentring in terms of two aspects of the educational reality in Honduras: the lack of access to locally relevant resources / training and to opportunities for professional development, which the public education system suffers from; and the inequality of resources and opportunities between public and private schools, which leads to huge gaps in learning between these two systems.
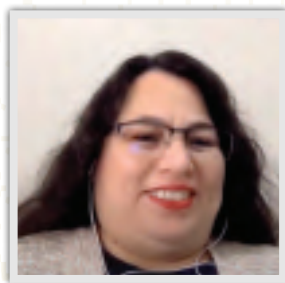

Grazzia María
Mendoza Chirinos

For Grazzia, decentring is tied up with concerns of access, equity and inclusion in her education system.

For Prem Phyak, decentring involves critically examining *'the relevance of the knowledge and practices that have … been part of English language teaching for so long'* and finding ways of recognizing local expertise and integrating local knowledge and cultures into ELT.


Prem Phyak

Eric Enongene Ekembe

Shreesh Chaudhary
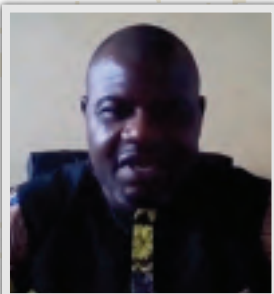
Relating decentring to critical pedagogy, Eric Ekembe highlighted the ideological underpinnings of centring and decentring and how they *'extend the ideological orientation of ELT teaching approaches'*.

Viewing decentring as *'finding local solutions to global problems'*, Shreesh Chaudhary saw *'decentring as finding your own sustainable locally viable solutions'*.
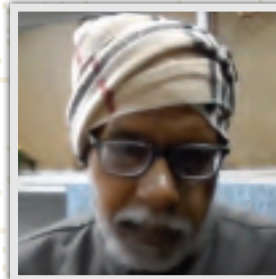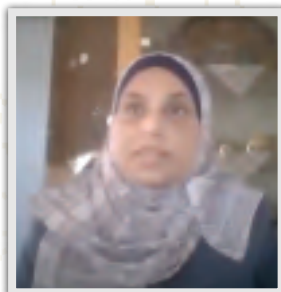
Hasna AbuMezied

For Hasna AbuMezied, *'decentring ELT is the process of teaching English … with understanding the minimum resources that we have and acknowledging the impact of the political circumstances'*.

Two common threads in conceptualizations or perceptions of decentring seemed to emerge from the discussion – firstly, the complexity and diversity of the phenomenon itself, which make it very challenging to find a widely applicable definition or characterization of decentring, and, secondly, the need to recognize the presence of multiple centres and hence multiple ways and models of decentring. In fact, some panellists argued that it was neither desirable, nor justified, to seek one common notion or definition. In Prem Phyak's words, *'when we talk about decentring it means many things for many people and we don't really have to agree on our ideas. If we really think of having consensus of what it is, then again it's not decentring'*. Eric Ekembe agreed with this – *'If we have to understand the practice of decentring … it's just going to be highly diversified. The local practices, the local dynamics are never going to be common … If they have a determinant effect on practice then these factors are far from common'*.

Insights relating to teacher development

Another theme of the discussion was how decentring operates in or is related to practice in different contexts. Prem raised some issues about prevalent notions of teacher training, which he found 'dehumanizing', treating teachers as "trainable subjects like animals' and not paying adequate attention to their contexts, socio-cultural realities, values, and so on. He suggested that to approach teacher training in a decentred way implies recognizing their agency, knowledge and skills built up over years and redistributing these as legitimate knowledge and skills to other contexts as well. Presenting a somewhat different perspective and arguing for a broader view of training, Shreesh considered training desirable since *'teaching is not always a biologically natural activity of human beings'* and some kind of training might be essential. In order to make it relevant and appropriate, though, he suggested creating *'a fraternity of colleagues who can innovate, who understand the local problems, [who have] minimum competence in the language'* or, so long as this is not in place, *'we can help them as well or we can train them to train themselves'*. Eventually this should *'create a culture where people train themselves to innovate according to the situation'*. Eric mentioned a common challenge teachers face – *'a marked difference between training and practice because the context of practice is unreal in training'* – and suggested that teacher-research could be a strongly decentring approach to tackle

this challenge, helping teachers in making sense of their training and making it relevant to their own contexts. Hasna described a personal experience of how she and her colleagues had been sharing perspectives on decentring for the previous two weeks, leading to valuable insights. They realized, for example, that each faced challenges in the classroom quite differently, that they were using their own individual ways of handling them, and that most teachers had developed their own, valuable 'local' solutions to some of the challenges. She confessed that '*we did not know that this was decentring; we did not know that it was putting forward your local expertise and your local thoughts about how to deal with these situations*', but they had become more conscious of the value of their experience and had come to appreciate this approach to professional development.

Contextual (including political and ideological) features shaping centring or decentring

Towards the end, the discussion veered to various issues any decentring process would have to address. Various interesting comments and questions posted in the 'chat' by the audience and the panellists' responses to them added great value to this discussion. One was the issue of according prestige status to a certain variety – particularly, a spoken variety – of English and putting an irrational emphasis on acquiring and using it. Another was the tendency of seeking some 'stamp of approval' from an agency (for example, the British Council) or an authority (for example, a university professor) before recognizing an idea or practice of a teacher as valid. Yet another was a common trend of external evaluation of teachers' practice, performance or approaches by outsiders (e.g. officials from ministries of education) with little understanding of teachers' contexts and realities or with little knowledge and skills for such evaluation. One more issue was the deskilling of teachers when their knowledge, agency, insider experience and expertise are rejected. Issues like these are real and practical ones which teachers routinely face and which contribute to a strong centring process. For any initiative in and attempt

at decentring it was considered essential to begin by tackling one or more of these realities. As Paula pointed out in her concluding remarks, in addition to creating frameworks for understanding decentring, it is equally important to create opportunities for decentring in a practical and political way. Issues like these indicate where efforts to create decentring opportunities may be directed.

6 Further consultation: responses via questionnaire

A further way in which we hoped to get wider perspectives was via questionnaires, which we invited December 2021 conference participants to complete by the end of Day 1. This was our way of bringing participants' voices into the discussion. Members of the conference organizing team analysed the questionnaire responses in the evening of Day 1 and provided summaries on Day 2, sharing selected quotes from the questionnaire.

Here are summaries of answers to each question, together with associated commentary based on remarks made during the conference session by organizing team members. (The full session recording is available via a link in the programme in Chapter 4 above.)

Does the concept of decentring ELT seem important to you? Why/Why not?

Conference participants who responded via questionnaire agreed – unsurprisingly, since they had chosen to attend the conference – on the importance of the notion of decentring ELT. However, their stated reasons for this were interesting:

Classroom practice

The notion of decentring ELT has the potential to improve teaching and learning in classrooms through more contextually appropriate teaching. Key words here included 'local', 'situated' and 'context-sensitive'.

Teacher development

Decentring ELT is beneficial for teacher development – the set of reasons included greater professional effectiveness as well as confidence, a word which was repeated in a number of responses. Decentring is seen as important in that it is empowering for teachers and gets teachers sharing and working together, with teacher associations and communities of practice being mentioned in this connection. The notion of decentring is also seen as something novel and stimulating with the potential to inspire teachers.

A political, theoretical, critical dimension

According to some respondents, decentring ELT can counter imperialist, colonial teaching in relation to classroom practice and course books. The comments here reflect a desire for parity of esteem, and for forms of equality of all teachers and classroom practices.

Here, and below each set of responses, we present excerpts from comments made by organizing committee members during the questionnaire reporting session.

▶ *'These three themes can be seen as constructing the importance of decentring ELT in an integrated way. Classroom practice is improved if teachers are informed, inspired and empowered as well as working more collaboratively – the ways in which decentring contributes to professional development. These, in turn, are close to the benefits to practice from engagement with wider themes in thinking, that is, more theoretical, political, critical voices.'* (Richard Kiely)

▶ *'There is little detail in the responses about the kind of teaching facilitated by decentring ELT. This is perfectly reasonable – there was no request for examples in the questionnaire – but possibly points to a direction in which the initiative can go, where we need to have more description of actual practices to fill out the labels summarized above.'* (Richard Kiely)

▶ *'We can focus on the impacts of empowerment, etc. but on the other side we're in an environment which requires decentring and, I think, perhaps more focus on why teachers feel disempowered – what is disempowering teachers at the moment – could be another possible future direction for further study. These structures of oppression or imposition are something that we could consider, together.'* (Richard Smith)

▶ *'Yes, the fact that there are centres at all levels and the whole way in which centres perceive teachers are factors that are seriously disempowering, in the sense that teachers just aren't encouraged to participate in decision-making at any level.'* (Martin Wedell)

▶ *'These are important points. There is a need for better understanding of the background respondents are speaking from. There's an echo throughout of serious problems being suffered, and arguably not much substance in the way decentring ELT is engaging with those. But this is a start. It is something that is opening up an agenda and I think the panel discussion [cf. Chapter 5] provided more specification of the depth of the structural issues that teachers face in their work.'* (Richard Kiely)

▶ *'As long as governments are responsible for education there is always going to be a power issue involved. And when we talk about decentring and teacher empowerment, there is an issue of social justice or injustice because of the power dynamics that exist within the education industry, if we may call it that. There is really no fight for justice that will succeed without allies in the oppressing camp. So, one of the things that I think needs careful reflection is, yes, teachers are happy with the idea of decentring and they're engaged in decentring at local levels but this is not gaining prominence because of the power dynamics in the structures they're within. The issue then is: how can teacher associations, teacher communities of practice and so on negotiate alliances with people within those power structures to facilitate decentring and how can we – or the Hornby Trust maybe – support initiatives more broadly?'* (Harry Kuchah Kuchah)

Do you see English teaching and learning in your working context being influenced by ideas or practices that reflect 'centring' or 'ELT centres'? If so, how?

There was a virtually universal 'yes' from respondents to this question. The main themes that emerged from the examples were:

'BANA [Britain, Australia, North America] ideas rule'

This was a quote from Nepal. The extent to which those ideas are seen to influence and affect ELT is very varied in scale, from India, where one result is that not enough consideration is given to the different linguistic, ethnic and socio-economic groups and their actual needs for English; to Madagascar, where ideas within the nationally promoted ELT approach reflect centring, for example communicative approach, task-based teaching, critical thinking, learner-centredness, and so on; to other places where native speakers continue to be seen as experts, and where teacher evaluation depends on how many foreign techniques you can use in class regardless of whether they're relevant to those learners or appreciated by them; to Pakistan, where Urdu is not allowed in (some) classrooms even as a translanguaging tool. So, BANA ideas are seen as strongly influencing teachers at macro and micro levels.

Who are the promoters of BANA ideas?

There were some interesting comments about the influence of global publishers and exam boards. These pointed out that the ELT publishing industry has to operate at a large scale to make profits and therefore can only consider needs at national and global levels since its main customers are ministries or large chains of private language schools. It can't afford to worry about local needs, especially in low resource or low-income countries. Also mentioned was the incredible power of centre exam boards – especially, Cambridge Assessment was mentioned: What are they actually testing? What English varieties? What aspects of English?

Centre-produced textbooks promoting centre culture and pronunciation

In Latin America, particularly, there is a focus on the importance of teaching British or American pronunciation and culture. And from the Philippines and Palestine there was an interesting point made that the lack of connection in materials to learners' own settings affects perceptions of the difficulty of learning English. It always sounds 'foreign' because it isn't actually situated locally in any way.

Power of local centres

Then, there is the power of local centres that don't value or recognize teachers, as mentioned by Prem Phyak in the panel discussion. There were many comments on this from South Asia, about teachers in schools and colleges being subordinate to centres of power like the ministry, boards of education and school administrations which ignore teachers' voices. Teachers believe they have no role to create anything – they are often suppressed by 'professors', and examples were given of a new national

learning platform being introduced where the officials did not think of asking teachers to contribute to curriculum decisions, or new curricula being introduced without any consultation with teachers.

Influence of centre ideas on teacher education

As focused on in the panel discussion, teacher training influenced by ideas and knowledge from the centre orients practice in a certain direction and trainees are sent out with ideas that ELT should be based on methods and approaches from the Global North, which then influences the experiences of large numbers of learners negatively.

Commentary:

▸ *'When we say "BANA ideas rule", it may be necessary to reflect more on where we are putting the blame: on the ideas themselves, on the way they have been implemented, or on uncritical acceptance of them? Or are we looking at a combination of all of these? In the responses, it comes up again and again that one of the key concerns teachers have is that their voices are never heard in relation to whether or when ideas are imported and implemented.'* (Amol Padwad)

▸ *'It is also interesting to see the way that responses both mention BANA institutions like testing agencies and publishers and their dominance around the world and consider local centres in different countries which have internalized or which reproduce a kind of imposition of particular ideas. I think this implies that we need economic, political and sociological critiques which are more sophisticated than simply laying blame on native speakers or BANA institutions. We need to look at neocolonialism as a process and how it operates through different countries' own academic institutions and elites.'* (Richard Smith)

▸ *'Another observation relates to the way teachers are likely to feel bad or at least not confident about what they are doing, given that the discourse is structured in terms of expertise coming from elsewhere. This is a challenge for decentring in that teachers may not have the confidence to share what they're doing due to the way they may have been disempowered.'* (Richard Kiely)

▸ *'[Despite critiques, and discourses of inadequacy,] these teachers are coping – they are supporting students. We need much more research which tries to get through the sense of not being supported to actually finding out what is positive in the practice of these teachers, what actually enables them to cope, and their students or some students to progress, and then build on that. Otherwise, there's a risk that we are developing the critique and not doing enough that is positive.'* (Richard Kiely)

▸ *'I think that within this initiative, the Decentring ELT initiative, we're not really engaging in such a critique very much. We are actually focusing very much on trying to identify cases of interesting practice. We're not taking very ideological or academic perspectives in fact. This is what we've been doing and this, I think, is what we should be doing.'* (Richard Smith)

Did anything in the [case studies of TA decentring practice] catch your attention, or seem particularly relevant to your context? If so, what and why?

The activities that were mentioned as particularly relevant, and some of the reasons why, were as follows:

Sharing of success stories

Many referred to this [cf. Sagun Shrestha's report in Chapter 3], and the reasons mainly related to giving teachers a voice, the positive impact on teaching and learning, the value of local knowledge or expertise, and the development of appropriate criteria for 'good practice' As one respondent wrote:

> '[Teachers] can learn context-sensitive strategies from their colleagues through success story sharing events; they can learn the best practices from each other rather than relying on "experts".'

Teacher-research and TA- research initiatives

The main point that came across here was the relevance of local knowledge, with reference being made to an AINET initiative (not reported in this book but described by Krishna Dixit at the conference) which involved mentoring of teacher-research. This was seen as involving:

> 'the idea that [teacher-research] can help teachers to explore their classroom issues and resolve them without relying on prescriptive solutions from experts, which might not fit the local context.'

Positive reference was also made to the CAMELTA experience of a TA 'researching the needs and/or capabilities of its members'.

Communities of practice

Quite a few found these examples (e.g. ELTA-GB, CLASS) relevant, too. Respondents were either already involved in developing communities of practice (e.g. ATER in Rwanda) or planning on doing so (e.g. in Malawi). There was particular approval for one case (in DR Congo) where the plan was specifically to attract more women to participate.

Materials and curriculum development

A few interesting comments related to how to promote local writers and editors and how these may be better served by local publishers rather than large international publishing companies. Some also referred to the example of the secondary curriculum in Guinea Bissau as a good example of how teachers can create materials based on the needs of their learners.

Disseminating local expertise

People also were impressed by an academic writing course provided by FAAPI, Argentina, for its members which was reported on at the conference though not in this book:

> *'if teachers could write, they would be able to make their practices available to the wider community so other interested teachers can benefit.'*

It was also felt that encouraging local speakers, rather than international ones at ELT events would lead to more relevant and realistic take-away ideas, as in the APIBA on Tour experience (Chapter 3).

Overall

Here are some quotes from questionnaire responses which sum up participants' positive views about the examples shared:

> ▶ *'I like the stories about these empowering initiatives especially during the pandemic – the whole idea of teachers coming together to help each other, develop material and find solutions for their challenges. This is a positive departure from dependence on government officials or publishers.'*
>
> ▶ *'What really resonated with me was the way TAs are taking very similar approaches to the professional development of their members and committing to practices that generate practical and useful knowledge for many rather than just a few (something that cannot be said of "centre"-led initiatives).'*
>
> ▶ *'The examples of decentring ELT in practice were very helpful because I realised that I can also develop a project like these in my own context.'*

Commentary:

> ▶ *'It's good to hear that some of these initiatives are inspiring for others. We've been trying to identify what has been going on that hasn't been advertised enough and publicizing that – sharing them in this kind of conference is one step.'* (Richard Smith)
>
> ▶ *'Yes, and, while it's not surprising that individual teachers have been making efforts at decentring because, as individuals, good teachers always try to do something [positive], the case studies presented efforts by Teacher Associations – and when there are small or large collectives of people trying to do things in that way it means that there has been some kind of conscious and purposeful attempt to counter unhelpful practices … if individuals come together in the form of associations or organizations and do it collectively, more systematically and purposefully, in a planned way, I think there will be a much brighter and stronger future for decentring.'* (Amol Padwad)

Have you come across any examples of decentring ideas or activities in your context?

An overall aim of the Decentring ELT initiative as a whole is to try to highlight cases which might be inspiring for others, as a first step at least, and trying to publicize them. In that spirit, here are some further examples that respondents contributed:

Teacher Association practices

There were a few mentions of names of other teacher associations which participants feel are engaging in decentring ELT – one mentioned was NileTESOL, in Egypt. There was also a mention of decentring within a teacher association itself – this involved AINET trying to bring women practitioners in ELT to the forefront (cf. also the ELTA-GB case study's emphasis on female teachers' empowerment, in Chapter 3).

Communities of Practice

A lot of respondents recognized the phenomenon of Communities of Practice and they recognized this as a kind of practice already going on in their own context, whether called that or 'teacher groups', and so on. For example:

> *'Teachers regularly meet in their schools to discuss the best ways to deal with the obstacles they face in teaching English and to develop remedial plans.'*

This was a quote from somebody in Palestine, while a participant in Rwanda mentioned that their TA has ten CoPs. So, while we know that in Sub-Saharan Africa there are several TAs engaging in devolution of activity through CoPs. There are also unaffiliated 'English Teacher Clubs' in India, for example, and WhatsApp groups elsewhere for teachers meeting online to share classroom activities and experiences, pictures and videos.

Support for teacher-research

There were some mentions of teacher associations supporting practitioner inquiry as described by Krishna Dixit with regard to AINET or Sagun Shrestha with regard to sharing of success stories. In Nepal for example, teachers have been engaged in exploratory action research within NELTA. Some who replied had been involved with the AINET teacher-research initiative and praised this as an excellent example of how teachers have collaborated to develop practical solutions.

In-service training

Moving on from activities within teacher associations, in-service training was mentioned by some. One respondent mentioned how, in India, some cluster resource centre meetings aim to identify challenges and solutions to classroom problems and follow steps which this respondent believes are related to decentring.

Initial teacher training

Some others focused on initial teacher training, which, to date, has not been considered much within the Decentring ELT initiative. For example, a trainer at a teacher training college in Cameroon said 'We train trainees to develop materials in context […] in such a way that they can be used in teaching morals as well', reflecting a local conception of what materials are for. Another teacher trainer, this time in Argentina, mentioned that they 'promote activities to decentre textbooks, materials etc.' with their trainees and, in another form of critical pedagogy, `also 'promote the use of English as an

international language, having the world as context and not attached to hegemonic practices' (see also below for more ideas on decentring with regard to language ideologies).

Course and materials design

One respondent mentioned how they take the local syllabuses of courses other than English and incorporate topics and themes from these to teach English, in a kind of collaboration with other subject teachers. This relates to another point, made by a teacher in Bulgaria, advocating proactive CLIL [Content and Language Integrated Learning], collaborating in schools with teachers of science, geography, civics, history, literature, art, etc. It is of interest that these respondents relate the idea of decentring to integration with other school subjects within the (local or national) education system. Another example came from a participant in Egypt who has been involved in a project for InterFaith Dialogue – related to the important local issue of religious tolerance – in a university language centre.

Own teaching practices

Our focus in the Decentring ELT initiative has, to date, been on teachers' professional development. but it is interesting that several teachers interpreted what we were talking about in terms of their own approach to teaching. Thus, several mentioned their own teaching practices, which, taken together, seemed to relate to a kind of autonomy-oriented or learner-centred approach, including relating English teaching to learners' own context.

One mentioned developing local clubs for students to talk together, in the same way as we have been here thinking about CoPs / teacher groups for teachers. Another participant mentioned the example of student writing as a powerful way of bringing local knowledge and local relevance into classroom practices.

Commentary:

▸ *'Of course, a decentred approach to materials design – do we impose ideas or do we try to develop ideas from the bottom up – is linked to how we do teacher training, with a focus on what the trainees are bringing from the local context, and to the way we treat language learners, not imposing ideas on them but starting from where they're coming from. So these 'decentring' approaches are inter-linked in their common focus on autonomy, agency and voice.'* (Richard Smith)

▸ *'Yes, so we see here the idea of the teacher as someone who is close to learners, identifying their real needs and addressing them in ways that are appropriate – and that is linked to the idea of practitioners being drivers of their own professional development and developers of appropriate resources rather than relying on outsider resources which do not address their learners' needs.'* (Amol Padwad)

▸ *'The notion of empowerment keeps coming – we've seen decentring being associated with teacher empowerment and control of teaching and learning resources. But we also had a comment which*

questioned the notion of empowerment – what actually empowers teachers? Every new idea [from the centre] seems to be seen as meant to empower teachers. So how can decentring actually empower teachers in practical terms? That's something that needs to be explored even further.' (Harry Kuchah Kuchah)

Would you like to see any decentring ideas or activities happening in your context? Why/Why not?

The overwhelming answer to this was yes. Not surprisingly, there were a lot of ideas which related to the TA case studies that had been shared (see above). So, the activities which people mentioned that they would like to see happening in their own context were often things like communities of practice or sharing experiences, for example in success story meetings. But there were also ideas that had not been much discussed, for example about changing teachers' mindset with regard to using mother tongue in the classroom, or identifying diverse editors and writers of materials and trying to use materials which were produced outside the US and Europe.

Other developments seen as desirable related to teachers participating in research themselves, contributing more to academic research and even 'taking charge' of research as well as making efforts to disseminate their own research. Another suggestion related to the government introducing teacher training to help teachers design their own activities to suit their needs and contexts.

There were also some suggestions regarding needs to diminish the dominance of standard English itself, with more open-mindedness needing to be shown with regard to acceptability of non-standard varieties, along with valuing of local linguistic practices. One respondent mentioned that, in India, in-service training sessions emphasize how to use English to make students learn English, but the ground reality is entirely different – students have many languages and there is insufficient consideration in in-service training about how to use their mother tongues. This relates to the issue which Prem Phyak had raised in the panel discussion regarding multilingualism and approaches to ELT, and respondents in Congo and Nepal expressed concerns about how to address the serious challenge of neglect and peripheralization of home language literacy (L1). If children find the language they speak outside the school is devalued and many never acquire literacy in it, what impact does that have?

Here there is an important potential intersection between decentring ELT and current academic debates around standard language ideology, translanguaging and multilingualism, but few practical ideas in the latter areas were in fact shared or espoused by participants or speakers at this conference. Similarly, there seem to be directions to explore in the area of links between decentring ELT and critical pedagogy and education for social justice, as some respondents pointed out. Injustices such as discriminatory access to professional development opportunities could be investigated, while we need to question where the 'truth' in ELT actually lies and how viable and sustainable local practices can be better captured and shared. It was also suggested that the answer to this last question might be achieved not just by teachers or practitioners but by also involving students in the thinking process.

Three interesting caveats for decentring were also shared. One respondent suggested that there needs to be a balance between the local and the central because, in their own context, they find there is a tendency to be 'too local'. This needs to be understood in context and in more detail. Another response was a suggestion that decentring practices should be run under supervision and [controlled?] conditions. Again, this idea requires further investigation but does seem to indicate some reluctance to engage in radical change. A third caveat indicated that the funding for decentring initiatives needs to be made transparent. There may be a suggestion in these three comments that we need to be quite nuanced and careful when we approach both centring and decentring. There are lots of complex issues which are not easily resolvable but need to be addressed in order to ensure that effective decentring takes place.

Finally, though, a strong message was conveyed by respondents that decentring is already happening 'under the radar' and many individual teachers are taking up initiatives, in their classrooms, to address students' specific needs in ways that may not be prescribed by the centre or the policy-makers in their communities. There is, though, a shared perception of need for organizations like teacher associations to create opportunities for sharing success stories and supporting other forms of decentring activity so that teachers can learn from one other in a more systematic way. Why? In respondents' own words, because it will (variously):

'lead to a breakthrough in language teaching and learning in general'

'lead to teachers' own empowerment and promote teachers' professional development'

'help teachers to promote positive change in their context'

'lead to growth in teachers' confidence'

'[help teachers to] find their own voices'

'[ensure that] teachers would have some way of their voices being heard'

'open up new content and knowledge, eventually enriching the students and teachers both'

7 A revised characterization of decentring ELT

We began with a provisional characterization of decentring ELT (in Chapter 2), which was formulated in 2019. Based on all the further examples and thinking that had been shared since then (as reported in this book), following the December 2021 conference the Hornby Trust's Decentring ELT working group agreed the following revised version of the initial statement. While we still view this revised characterization as provisional and open to local adaptation / appropriation and possible critique, reasons for the changes from the initial (v.1) statement are provided below.

What is 'decentring ELT'? (v.2, 2022)

"The world of ELT has been characterized by a hegemony of 'global' or 'centre' approaches and materials developed outside the teaching contexts in which they are expected to be used. However, these approaches and materials ('frames for action') are not necessarily appropriate to and do not recognize teachers' and other insiders' experience and expertise in those contexts.

A decentring perspective involves valuing and seeking to understand how teachers, often collaborating with each other, try to articulate key features of their work (including the reasons for these features) and ways they feel their practice can be improved. It highlights teachers' own development of contextually appropriate thinking and action (on methodology, materials design, curriculum development, teacher education, and so on) in relation to the needs of their local contexts.

Decentring ELT enables exploration of alternatives to English language teaching centred on 'outsider' agendas. It entails engagement of contextually situated, 'insider' expertise and creativity, with teachers and groups of teachers identifying, understanding and extending practices which are effective for them, and which can be built on by other teachers, teacher educators and policy makers."

> 'A decentring perspective involves valuing and seeking to understand how teachers, often collaborating with each other, try to articulate key features of their work (including the reasons for these features) and ways they feel their practice can be improved.' [2022, v.2]
>
> vs. [2019, v.1]: 'Empowerment involves collaborating with teachers / encouraging teachers to collaborate with each other to articulate key features of their work, reasons for these, and ways they feel their practice can be improved.'

The above change was made to acknowledge teachers' and groups of teachers' own agency and actual practices and to shift the statement from being programmatic to being relatively descriptive and supportive (of existing practice). Rather than empowerment being seen as something done to teachers via collaboration of an outside agency with them or encouragement of them, the emphasis is now placed on how at least some teachers, often in communities of practice as in the case studies included in this book (Chapter 3), already do engage in bottom-up professional development activities – not simply as something that 'should' occur but as something discoverable in practice.

> '[Decentring ELT] highlights teachers' own development of contextually appropriate thinking and action (on methodology, materials design, curriculum development, teacher education, and so on) in relation to the needs of their local contexts.' [2022, v.2]
>
> vs. [2019, v.1]: 'Work needs to be put into empowering teachers to develop contextually appropriate thinking and action (on methodology, materials design, curriculum development, teacher education, etc.), in relation to the needs of their local contexts.'

This part of the statement has also been changed to acknowledge that the earlier (v.1) statement reflected a relatively top–down way of thinking ('Work needs to be put in …'), implying as it did that an outside agency (like the Hornby Trust) should attempt to bring about change rather than placing the focus on insiders' ability to achieve this, and on description and appreciation of their own work.

> 'Decentring ELT enables exploration of alternatives to English language teaching centred on "outsider" agendas.' [2022, v.2]
>
> vs. [2019, v.1]: 'This process can be termed 'decentring ELT', in contrast with English language teaching which is centred on "outsider" agendas.'

This is just a small change of wording, placing more focus on what decentring can enable and less on what it 'is'.

'[Decentring ELT] entails engagement of contextually situated, "insider" expertise and creativity, with teachers and groups of teachers identifying, understanding and extending practices which are effective for them, and which can be built on by other teachers, teacher educators and policy makers.' [2022, v.2]

vs. [2019, v.1]: 'Decentring ELT is not about proposing new teaching methods, or changes in education policy, but rather about recognising contextually situated, "insider" expertise and creativity in actual practice, and through this, supporting teachers and groups of teachers in understanding and extending practices that are effective for them.'

This change places a more positive emphasis on characterizing what decentring can involve and enable and less on indicating what it is not. Our increased awareness of cases such as those described in Chapter 3 led us to understand that decentred/decentring practices can affect educational policy (as in the ELTA-GB curriculum development example). A greater focus is placed on understanding and on sharing of effective practices, as locally defined.

8 What does decentring mean for you?

We have emphasized throughout the book that the notion of decentring is fluid and open to discussion and questioning, and panel discussion responses at the conference (Chapter 5) confirmed not only that such indeterminacy and ambiguity seem appropriate but also that decentring practices will logically always need to be locally determined. At the same time, as the case studies and feedback in this book have shown, the idea of decentring ELT has been confirmed to have actual and potential practical value to teachers in a wide variety of contexts, and there seems to be value, also, in it being more widely discussed and disseminated – hence, this publication.

Accordingly, here, we explicitly invite you, the reader, to consider decentring ELT from your own perspective, in relation to your own context. To this end, it might be valuable to ask yourself, or – preferably, perhaps – to discuss together in a group of teachers (e.g. as a Teacher Association or (other) community of practice activity) and/or with others interested some of the following questions:

- How does the notion of decentring ELT strike you? Does it seem relevant to you? Why / Why not? What does it mean to you / How does it resonate with you?

- What are examples of centred ELT in your experience? Has this been appropriate or inappropriate. In what ways?

- What are any examples of decentred ELT activity that you have experienced? Were these positive or negative? Why?

- What (further) decentring activities would you like to see? How could you help bring these about?

- What decentring activities would you not like to see? Why?

- What are some challenges to decentring ELT, as far as you can see? How could such challenges be overcome?

- What opportunities do you see for decentring ELT? What could decentring ELT lead to?

What this book has been – and hasn't been – about

In this publication, we have reported on discussions and activities which took place in 2018–22 around the notion of 'decentring ELT'. This was first formulated as a Hornby Trust initiative but is, nowadays, beginning to be referred to in the wider field of ELT/TESOL (for example, in 2023, in the titles of symposia hosted by the Africa ELTA and AsiaTEFL associations).

In parallel with the Decentring ELT initiative (during the same time-frame), countries of the global north have seen a marked increase in academic discussion of general goals such as decolonizing the curriculum, social justice and anti-racism, as well as decentred *linguistic* notions relating to English as a lingua franca, translanguaging and countering the hegemony of nativespeakerism. 'Decentring' clearly shares commonalities with these theoretical trends. However, the roots of the Hornby Trust's Decentring ELT initiative lie in relatively long-standing experience, practical work and critiques rather than in recent academic discussions. At least 30 years ago, a critical turn occurred in the area of ELT/TESOL theory (as represented in the work of, among others, Robert Phillipson, Alastair Pennycook, Adrian Holliday, Suresh Canagarajah and B. Kumaravadivelu). Since then, diverse practical initiatives and research studies have been undertaken in a spirit of decentring, including by former Hornby scholars such as Darío Banegas, Harry Kuchah Kuchah and Paula Rebolledo, among others, although without a 'decentring' label being used. The Hornby Trust's regional workshops (see, for example, Smith, Padwad & Bullock, 2017)[1] and its Teacher Association Project Awards (https://www.hornby-trust.org.uk/projects) have also been organized in the same spirit, and in 2018 the Decentring ELT initiative was constituted as a logical extension of these pre-existing experiences. Using the label 'decentring' has been new but the overall practices and ideas it responds to and takes forward are not.

A focus on practice

Another motivation for the Decentring ELT initiative was that, in spite of the above-mentioned 30-year-old critical turn in theory and in some cases in practice, the last decades have paradoxically

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1 Smith, R., Padwad, A., and Bullock, D. (2017).*Teaching in Low-resource Classrooms: Voices of Experience*. British Council.

seen a strengthening of the 'global' (in fact, BANA-based) ELT industry, via exports of coursebooks and other materials, English language testing, and teacher training programmes. At the same time – as responses to our consultations have revealed (Chapters 2 and 6) – government, academic, teacher training and even teacher association leaderships may also treat teachers in a top–down way, even if at a more local level. In other words, change at the level of theory is insufficient on its own and attention still needs to be focused on needs for change in the processes and practices of teacher development and English teaching. In our estimation, by focusing on cases of locally defined good practice in global-south contexts, the Decentring ELT initiative has been playing a constructive, practice-oriented and possibly unique role, in a different domain from that of academic research, critique and theorizing.

Characterizing 'decentring ELT'

Apart from examining a range of case studies of Teacher Association practice in the area of decentring ELT, the working group guiding the initiative also formulated and, after a period of consultation, reformulated a provisional characterization of decentring ELT, as reflected in Chapters 1 and 7. Rather than representing a fixed theoretical position, this characterization is presented here as still, indeed continuously, open to modification. It has served as a useful reference point for our activities but, in order for there to be consistency with the idea of decentring itself, the characterization will need to be interpreted and engaged with differently in different contexts, in relation to variously perceived phenomena of 'centred' thinking and practice. We should, then, bear in mind the point made by Prem Phyak in the conference panel discussion reported in Chapter 5 that 'decentring is a continual question[ing]'. Decentring ELT could otherwise easily become a slogan, something fixed and dogmatic, especially if it begins to be thought of as some kind of new teaching approach. This is far from being our intention; accordingly, we have offered a set of questions (in Chapter 8) to open up the characterization to further discussion and possible critique.

Needs for ongoing self-critique

Conscious of our own positioning within what could be seen as 'centres' of ELT/TESOL, the members of the Hornby Trust Decentring ELT working group have endeavoured to lay open our collective thinking to potential challenge and critique. We acknowledge that charities or NGOs such as the Hornby Trust – and the teacher associations we have been supporting – can themselves be viewed as promoters of centred thinking, and this highlights the importance of continuing consultation, internal critique and problematization of the kind we hope we have demonstrated in this publication. As a group, we have become more aware of the need to be transparent, vigilant and self-critical regarding our own activities, bearing in mind the possibility that renewed centring can occur in the guise of decentring.

Similar considerations may apply to the Hornby Trust's key partners in this initiative to date, that is teacher associations in global-south contexts. While consultations so far, as reported in this book, indicate that decentring ELT is considered a worthwhile goal and that TAs can be key agents for taking

it forward, it may also be useful and necessary for TAs to consider their own leadership structures from a decentring perspective. Indeed, promoting marginalized groups within TA leaderships (with a particular focus on gender) emerged as a theme (see Chapter 2), and as a possible future direction for activity, as indicated in this comment: 'In TAs often leaders are the centre and other members feel marginalised, especially women in some cultures. They suffer the consequences of that double hegemony' (Africa ELTA webinar participant, Senegal).

Local realities – and local good practices

The above comments reflect our growing awareness of the reality that, along with outside agencies, local centres and internalized centring can be powerful forces militating against the empowerment of teachers. In other words, while colonization processes 'from the outside' may have resulted in present conditions of disempowerment, and while neocolonialism may support their continuance, top–down structures in teachers' more immediate context and the deference to outside expertise which these reinforce also need to be pointed out and addressed, from a practical perspective. This was highlighted eloquently in an intervention by Harry Kuchah Kuchah at the 2021 conference, and we quote him here at length:

> 'How has ELT evolved in the Global South? It's been very top–down and that has been translated into all levels of governance, especially in education, within an educational culture which is very centralized. Now, in such a context, a child will grow up learning never to dispute what an adult says and then goes to classrooms and cannot challenge the teacher, and then goes to a university training college where the person with the PhD is the supreme authority, where the professor's word is law, and that then causes problems. So, for many teachers in this kind of context, at least for myself, the reality of teaching is discovered in the field itself, when you start trying all these practices and they're just not working with your students and you have to start being inventive. I think that's what one of our colleagues here said – teachers are already practising decentring in many ways because many teachers are employing pragmatic responses to immediate realities in ways that are not consistent with their initial training. So, there's a lot of work to be done validating their practices.'

Harry here emphasizes both the need for and realities of empowerment, justifying the focus we have been placing on identification of 'good practices' (note: not conceived of prescriptively as 'best practices') which are usually under-acknowledged, indeed which often arise in principled opposition to powerful knowledge structures that tend to deny them. The idea of 'good practices' as defined by and potentially shared among teachers emerges as a useful counterweight to top–down notions of 'best practice' which teachers are expected to follow.

Mapping and engaging local expertise

Feedback received to date flags up the value but also a possible limitation of a core decentring belief: that recognizing and promoting local expertise is crucial for decentring to be impactful and sustainable. Decentring activity needs to critically examine assumptions that local expertise already exists and simply needs to be recognized/used, or that TAs or teachers are fully aware of what local expertise is available and how it could be utilized, or that all local expertise is essentially appropriate and adequate to address local concerns and needs. Decentring initiatives may therefore need to begin by making efforts to map and develop the local expertise that actually does exist. TAs can contribute substantially to this end.

New directions for the Decentring ELT initiative

Building on the discussions and sharing of practice reported in this book, the Hornby Trust Decentring ELT initiative is now focusing on identifying and providing support for practical work in the following areas (though we hope that others will additionally take decentring in other directions which seem appropriate):

- 'Teachers finding "local solutions" to "local problems" through sharing of practices, or adapting materials within a local area, or through locally focussed [teacher-research] projects' (Hornby Trust call for TA project award proposals, 2022 and 2023);

- 'New models of leadership and/or ways of involving TA members more fully in aspects of TA decision-making' (ibid.), including with a focus on gender equity;

- 'TA activity [which] aims to make one or more aspects of the wider English education system more relevant to teachers' contexts, through involvement with, for example, pre- or in-service teacher education, curriculum development, materials, and/or induction of novice teachers' (ibid.).

As can be seen, the Hornby Trust will continue to work with TAs in joint efforts to decentre ELT but is also turning its attention to pre-service teacher education. In this connection, as Martin Wedell said in his final reflections at the 2021 conference:

'Teachers are being prepared in many places still with the notion of "best" practice based on centred methods and approaches and they're not actually being prepared or encouraged at all to find local solutions or to think about local solutions.'

Of course, in the absence of appropriate guidance, teachers can and do develop locally appropriate good practice, and – although this tends to be unacknowledged and under-valued – such practice can be identified and shared. Beyond this, however, 'Decentring can contribute to acknowledging […] that all teachers need to adapt and innovate according to their context' (ibid.), and the place for developing abilities to do these things may lie in initial and otherwise formalized teacher education, not just the kind of informal CPD in TAs that has been emphasized in this publication.

Decentring ELT: Practices and Possibilities

Edited by Amol Padwad and Richard Smith

'… A decentring perspective involves valuing and seeking to understand how teachers, often collaborating with each other, try to articulate key features of their work (including the reasons for these features) and ways they feel their practice can be improved. It highlights teachers' own development of contextually appropriate thinking and action (on methodology, materials design, curriculum development, teacher education, and so on) in relation to the needs of their local contexts….' (Chapter 7: 'A revised characterization of decentring ELT').

The Decentring ELT initiative launched in 2018 by the A.S. Hornby Educational Trust aims to support the development and dissemination of English Language Teaching (ELT) ideas and actions that are found to be appropriate in particular contexts by participants themselves, with a specific focus on the needs of learners and teachers of English in public education systems in the Global South.

This book describes how the initiative has evolved to date. It proceeds from an initial, provisional characterization of decentring and shares responses from leaders and members of English language teacher associations (TAs) in Africa, Latin America and South Asia. The central part of the book presents case studies from TAs, showcasing specific examples of teacher development activities which seem consistent with the idea of decentring. Attention then shifts to reports of presentations, discussions and feedback at a December 2021 conference organized partly to celebrate the Hornby Trust's 60th anniversary. On this basis, a revised characterization of decentring is then offered and the book ends with a set of questions for further reflection and discussion as well as suggestions for further extensions of decentring.

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