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Part I

Introduction

1

Narrativising Learning and Teaching EFL: The Beginnings

Paula Kalaja, Vera Menezes and Ana Maria F. Barcelos

1 Rationale of *Narratives of Learning and Teaching EFL*

This introductory chapter provides background to the volume at hand, explaining its rationale, describing some specific contexts of learning English to give an idea of their great variety, and finally, providing an overview of its contents.

Mainstream literature has tended to view learning second or foreign languages in terms of the *acquisition* metaphor. Thus, the learner is considered a processor of input and negotiator of meaning with those around him/her, leading ultimately to output (the Input-Interaction-Output or IIO model, for a critical review, see e.g., Block 2003). The teacher, in turn, is one involved in providing input and negotiating meanings. With the acquisition metaphor gradually being replaced by (or complemented with) another one, that is, the *participation* metaphor, learning becomes a matter of the learner actively seeking learning opportunities and being eventually socialised into the practices of a specific group or community and accepted as its member. The active role of the learner also means that learning – and using the second or foreign language – turn(s) into *subjective* experiences, not universal ones, with his/her body, identities and emotions involved, and so the language and its learning get very *personal* meanings. In addition, the teacher becomes a provider of learning opportunities and a guide in the socialisation process. Context opportunities and constraints are also factors to be considered in the complexity of language learning and teaching.

Being aware of these developments, *Narratives of Learning and Teaching EFL* is a compiled collection of articles on *lived experiences of the English*

language – with a focus on the subjective meanings (including attitudes and beliefs) and emotions invoked – in English as a Foreign Language (EFL)¹ contexts of learning and/or teaching it or being its learner and/or teacher. In approaching these issues the contributors to this volume make use of fresh theoretical frameworks and innovative methods of data collection and/or analysis, including narratives.² As pointed out for example by Benson (2005), narratives are indeed suitable for these purposes. Overall, the chapters make up a cohesive kaleidoscope³ of different perspectives in research on EFL narratives.

Generally speaking, *Narratives of Learning and Teaching EFL* stands out from previous work on second or foreign language learning and teaching in its:

- unity in the research context: EFL (however, acknowledging diversity within this context, see Section 2), including both formal and informal contexts;
- diversity in focus within the chosen context: learners, teacher trainees and teachers. For example, the collection of articles on second language learning edited by Benson and Nunan (2005) focuses on students or that by Johnson and Golombek (2002) on teachers only;
- diversity in EFL learning and teaching experiences (with attention paid to emotional aspects of the experiences). There are a couple of collections of articles on affect, for example Arnold (1999) and Pavlenko (2006), but the focus of these is on second language learning (not foreign language learning);
- diversity in theoretical frameworks: instead of subscribing to one theoretical framework *Narratives of Learning and Teaching EFL* cherishes the idea of multiplicity in these (for details, see Table 1.1): there are, for example, a few collections of articles on second or foreign language learning conducted within a single framework, for example a Vygotskian one, consider Lantolf (2000) or Kelly-Hall et al. (2005);
- unity and at the same time diversity in methodology not only in data collection but also in its analysis: the volume extends the types of data used in research on narratives in second and foreign language learning and teaching. Written and oral narratives are complemented with visual (e.g., drawings and photographs) and multimodal ones, thanks to modern information technology (including sounds and pictures). Furthermore, the chapters illustrate two distinct ways of doing research with narratives (however, within a variety of frameworks): *analysis of narratives*⁴ in which case data consist of narratives, the analysis of these focusing on aspects of their content and/or form

or *narrative analysis* in which case sets of data are analysed, the outcome being an explanatory narrative. However, a classification into two types like this (with possible overlapping) does not do full justice to the individual chapters and their intricacies, so for details, see Table 1.1 (especially its last two columns).

Importantly, the use of English (and its learning and teaching) are rapidly increasing, and these days especially in the EFL contexts. There are millions and millions (the exact number is not easy to estimate) of citizens living on different continents and in countries ranging from China and Japan to countries in South America and Europe – wishing to learn English for their own specific purposes, and no longer just for international ones but also for national and local ones, including *Lingua Franca* situations, in which the language is nobody's first language. This is due to the globalisation of the English language and a consequent spread in its uses and users.

2 Contexts of EFL

We opted to use traditional terminology when referring to the contexts where learning and teaching English takes place in our studies (see Endnote 1) but at the same time we do acknowledge their diversity politically, economically, socially as well as culturally. Thus the contributions can only be viewed as illustrating this diversity and by no means exhausting it. However, as a number of the studies have been conducted in three specific countries (on three different continents), that is, Finland, Brazil and Japan, an attempt is made in the following to characterize these, concerning the status of English and its users and uses in these specific contexts of EFL – and in more practical terms, to avoid repetition from one chapter to another.

When comparing the contexts in Sections 2.1 to 2.3, there is huge variation to be noted in the users and uses of the English language and in its perceived importance (in comparison with other foreign languages, too); and furthermore in the challenges of organising teaching and providing learning opportunities for learners, considering, for example, the training of qualified EFL teachers and the production and provision of teaching materials in each country.

2.1 Finland (by Paula Kalaja)

Finland is a Scandinavian welfare state with some 5.2 million inhabitants. There is an established Swedish-speaking minority (5.5 per cent of

Table 1.1 Summary of Chapters 2 to 14

| Chapter/author(s) | EFL Context(s): formal or informal | Type of analysis | Participant(s) (Numbers) | Data | Framework/focus |
|--|------------------------------------|------------------------|--|------------------------------|---|
| Chapter 2 Tim Murphey and Christopher Carpenter | Japan: (in)formal | Analysis of narratives | University students (20) | Written narratives | Attribution theory: analysis of experiences of EFL learning in terms of contexts, relationship and affective factors, and attributions of hope and agency |
| Chapter 3 Ana Maria F. Barcelos | Brazil: formal | Analysis of narratives | University students (75) | Written narratives | Content analysis of experiences of and beliefs about EFL learning |
| Chapter 4 Deise P. Dutra and Heliana Mello | Brazil: formal | Analysis of narratives | Pre- and in-service teachers (2 + 2) | Written narratives, journals | Dewey's educational theory: analysis of experiences of EFL teaching in terms of open-mindedness, responsibility and wholeheartedness |
| Chapter 5 Laura Miccoli | Brazil: formal | Analysis of narratives | Teachers in public and private schools (14 + 20) | Written narratives | Thematic analysis of experiences of EFL teaching in two types of schools |

| | | | | | |
|--|----------------------------------|------------------------|---|--|--|
| Chapter 6 Leena Karlsson | Finland: formal | Narrative analysis | University student and teacher/counsellor/scholar | Written narratives, email, interviews, counselling sessions | Reflexive analysis of learning experiences of an EFL learner and (emotional) responses to these by the teacher |
| Chapter 7 Keiko Sakui and Neil Cowie | Japan: formal | Narrative analysis | University teachers/scholars (2) | Notes/reflections, student evaluations, journals, interviews | (Reflexive) Analysis of resistance patterns by students in EFL classrooms and (emotional) responses to these by teachers |
| Chapter 8 Sara Cotterall | Japan: formal | Analysis of narratives | Adult learners (3) | Interviews over time (within advising sessions), informal conversations, email | Analysis of EFL learning experiences, incl. beliefs, motives, goals and strategies |
| Chapter 9 Garold Murray | Japan: (in)formal | Analysis of narratives | Adult learners (3) | Interviews (turned into stories) | Content analysis of the role of (EFL) communities of practice inside the home country (and learner/user identity) |
| Chapter 10 David Block | Spain: formal | Analysis of narratives | Adult learner | Interviews over time | Analysis of learner identity in an EFL classroom |
| Chapter 11 Alice Chik and Phil Benson | Hong Kong and the UK: (in)formal | Narrative analysis | Post-graduate student | Interviews over time (turned into a story) | Analysis of overseas experiences, incl. learner/user identity, |

Continued

Table 1.1 Continued

| Chapter/author(s) | EFL Context(s): formal or informal | Type of analysis | Participant(s) (Numbers) | Data | Framework/focus |
|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|--|--|
| Chapter 12 Tarja Nikula and Anne Pitkänen-Huhta | Finland: (in)formal | Analysis of narratives | Secondary-school students (5) | Visual narratives: photographs of occasions of using EFL and discussions based on them | being mistaken for an EFL learner from Mainland China (Discursive) Analysis of the role of EFL in the everyday lives of young people (and learner/user identity) |
| Chapter 13 Paula Kalaja, Riikka Alanen and Hannele Dufva | Finland: (in)formal | Analysis of narratives | University students (110) | Visual narratives: self-portraits (or drawings) of EFL learners and written interpretations of these | Sociocultural theory: analysis of mediational means (e.g., books) resorted to in EFL learning and what their depiction tells of the nature of learning the language (or beliefs about SLA) |
| Chapter 14 Vera Menezes | Brazil: (in)formal | Analysis of narratives | University students (38) | Multimodal narratives, making use of modern IT (pictures, sounds) | Chaos/complexity theory: analysis of experiences of EFL learning in terms of two distinct but interacting phases of a complex system |

the population). Three Sami languages (spoken in the northern most parts of the country) and the Finnish sign language are other minority languages.

Finnish and Swedish are the two official languages of the country, while the Sami languages have a regionally recognised status, and the rights of users of the Finnish sign language have been legally recognized to some extent. Finnish and Swedish have a mandatory status at school: Finnish first-language speakers study Swedish and Swedish first-language speakers Finnish. In addition, there is an increasing number of Russian (0.8 per cent) and Estonian (0.3 per cent) speakers and a number of people speaking other foreign languages, the largest group being speakers of English.

In Finland, English has had the status of EFL, to use the traditional term. However, in the past few decades the uses and users of English have been on the increase because of political, economic and social changes, and thanks to technological innovations. As a result, Finns use English not only when abroad on business or leisure to interact (presumably) with first-language speakers of the language, but also in various domains for example business, education and leisure time in their home country.⁵ Besides, most TV programmes of Anglo-American origin are broadcast with subtitles (in Finnish and Swedish), as are films in cinemas. In other words, they are not dubbed. Furthermore, English functions frequently as a *Lingua Franca*, especially now that Finland has become a member of the European Union (with some 460 million people) and the commercial markets ever more global, with increased mobility of labour and commodities across borders.

Finns start studying the first foreign language in Grade 3 (at the age of nine). In 2005, almost 90 per cent opted for English. Additional foreign languages can be studied from Grade 5 or 7 onwards and in upper secondary school⁶ (Grades 10 to 12). In upper secondary school, English is still the most widely studied language, followed by other languages spoken in Europe: German, French, Spanish, Russian and Italian. Before graduating from upper secondary school, students have to pass the Matriculation Examination, a nationally organised set of tests in a number of subjects, some compulsory, others optional. A student is tested on his or her knowledge of Finnish or Swedish as the first language, and up to four foreign languages. In other words, within the Finnish school system there is a great emphasis on learning and teaching foreign languages, with considerable investment of resources by the Government. This is in accordance with the European Union language policy: every citizen is expected to know at least two languages spoken in the area, in

addition to their first language. While in the past knowledge of English used to be a privilege of the well-educated few, or of the Elite, as an editorial in *Helsingin Sanomat*, the leading national newspaper, put it in 2003; nowadays (some) use of English can be expected of all Finns.

2.2 Brazil (by Vera Menezes and Ana Maria F. Barcelos)

Brazil is a continental country, the biggest country in South America, with an area of 8,511,965 km², and estimated population of around 186 million inhabitants, the fifth largest population in the world. Brazil is the only Portuguese-speaking country in South America, but there are around 180 indigenous languages still spoken in reservations. Portuguese is the official language in Brazil, except for the Indian tribes living in remote reservations and their languages. Besides, a sign language called LIBRAS has just gained a mandatory status in Portuguese teacher education. Brazil has received a large number of immigrants and bilingual communities speak varieties of Italian, German, Polish or Japanese languages, but Portuguese is the only language of daily life. It has a mandatory status in schools, and these are supposed to teach at least one foreign language, too.

English has had the status of EFL in Brazil, although in some circles it can be used as a Lingua Franca for business, tourism, education, etc. It is worth mentioning that English pervades the entertainment industry and that Channel TV functions as a kind of an immersion context for the Elite with programmes broadcast with subtitles – in contrast to Open TV where films are dubbed.

According to Brazilian educational laws, foreign languages should be taught to children from around the age of ten until they graduate from high school. English is taught all over the country from Grade 5 (from the age of 10 or 11) until secondary school (up to Grade 8) or high school (Grades 9 to 12), students being 17 years of age by that time. Few schools offer other foreign languages, although teaching Spanish is growing as it has recently become mandatory in high school. In fact, students usually do not have much of a choice in regular schools: most offer only English.

In the majority of regular schools, English is taught from Grade 5 onwards with at most two classes a week of 50 minutes each. As salaries tend to be low, Brazilian teachers teach many classes per day and most of them complain that their classrooms are rather crowded (with around 30 to 40 students).

However, middle-class Brazilians usually start to study English at the age of seven by attending private schools or taking private courses.

Private schools are commercial institutions (some of these are bi-national centres financed by the American or British Government) and they offer classes in English as well as other languages such as German, French, Spanish and Italian for people who can pay for courses. Some of these institutions may offer scholarships for people who cannot afford them otherwise.

2.3 Japan (by Tim Murphey and his colleague Charles Browne, both with long academic careers in the country as occasional teacher trainers for the Ministry of Education and various prefectures)⁷

Japan, an Eastern Asian island chain between the North Pacific Ocean and the Sea of Japan, east of the Korean Peninsula, is officially a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary government. Slightly smaller than California, Japan is mostly rugged and mountainous. Since the end of World War Two, the basic structure of the Japanese educational system has been very similar to America's with its six years of elementary school (*shougakkou*), three years of junior high school (*chugakkou*), three years of high school (*koukou*) and either two years of junior college (*tankadaigaku* or *kareiji*) or four years of university (*daigaku*). Education is compulsory until 15, but about 90 per cent of the people complete high school and 40 per cent graduate from university or college.

Reiko Hatori (2005) usefully describes the linguistic environment in Japan:

Japan is sometimes misconceived as a homogeneous country, even by politicians. In reality 127.5 million 'Japanese' (Foreign Press Center Japan, n.d.) include two indigenous groups, Ainus and Okinawans. Because the census does not include ethnicity, the population and the numbers of the speakers of indigenous languages are unknown, leaving them categorized as 'Japanese'.

In addition to the indigenous population, in 2002 there were nearly two million foreign residents, 33.8 per cent of whom are South and North Korean nationals and 22 per cent Chinese nationals (Foreign Press Center Japan, n.d.). These statistics do not include people who have been naturalised as Japanese citizens, and the number of people from Korean and Chinese heritage backgrounds is also quite considerable. In 2002, nearly six million foreign visitors came to Japan, and the number of foreign students 'reached a record high of 109,508' in 2003 (Foreign Press Center Japan, n.d.). The majority of the foreign residents,

visitors and students are from Asian countries. While junior and senior high schools can choose to teach a variety of foreign languages the vast majority teach only English with a select few teaching Korean, Chinese, French, German, or Spanish.

English education has benefited from a certain priority status for quite some time in Japan. Yet it is still not seen as being very efficient due to (1) the influence of traditional university entrance exams, which until recently did not test listening comprehension skills (and still does not assess speaking ability), (2) the dominance of grammar-translation teaching methods and (3) the severe lack of pre-service and in-service training for English teachers. Another contributing factor is that classes in regular schools are large, with junior high schools averaging 34.3 students, about 30 per cent more students than in other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries (MEXT 2005, p. 23). This has led to a thriving cram school and conversation school industry to supplement the official school system. The conversation schools also often offer courses in other foreign languages as well, and there are regular TV programmes for learning the six major foreign languages. While CNN and cable movie channels are available, there are no foreign language TV channels in Japan.

In reaction to this lack of efficiency with regard to English education, in 2003, the Ministry of Education proclaimed the 'Action Plan to Cultivate Japanese with English Abilities' which funded a variety of educational initiatives including a call to send at least 10,000 high school students to study English abroad annually, giving primary schools the right to begin English lessons in the third grade as part of their Integrated Study curriculum, including for the first time criterion-based assessment of student ability via such measures as the STEP and TOEIC tests, short term funding for in-service training in EFL methodology for junior and senior high school teachers, and the creation of more than 100 accredited high schools throughout Japan known as 'Super English Language High Schools' (SeHi), for the purpose of creating and researching new and more effective ways of teaching English as a foreign language. Though ambitious-sounding, independent research has shown decidedly mixed results. In 2006, MEXT finally included a listening portion on their national Center Exam, which many universities use as part of their entrance procedures, something that Korea and China did decades ago.

Thus, while English enjoys a high status in part due to its necessity for globalisation, traditional teaching methods, high-stakes testing, and

large class sizes have kept much of the population in the dark ages of language learning. Things do appear to be changing slowly, however, and the host of recent initiatives may be evidence that enlightenment and a desire for more practical and communicative English instruction is finally dawning.

3 Organisation of *Narratives of Learning and Teaching EFL*

The volume consists of an Introduction (Chapter 1), laying out the rationale of the collection and providing an overview of its contents. This is followed by a number of chapters (Chapters 2 to 14) by individual contributors, divided into four sections based on what type of data was made use of and who produced and analysed the stories: (1) written narratives, or more specifically, language learning histories (LLHs), (2) self-narratives, (3) oral narratives, and (4) multimodal narratives. Each chapter has either theoretically and/or methodologically something new and innovative to contribute to the existing knowledge concerning the issues addressed. As far as possible, the 13 Chapters follow the same overall organisation of an empirical research report, starting off with Introduction, Background, Data collection and analysis, Findings, and closing with Discussion, including Implications, and Conclusion. *Narratives of Learning and Teaching EFL* closes with a Conclusion (Chapter 15) that comments on the preceding chapters, pointing out similarities and differences in the studies reported, evaluating the work done so far, and suggesting directions for further research.

Table 1.1 is a summary of the contributions by the authors: by context of study, type of analysis, data, participants and framework and/or focus.

Organised in this way it is easy to see how the chapters are similar or different, or how they complement one another. However, at this point we wish to stress that the volume is far from exhausting, rather it illustrates ways of conducting research that could be carried out in yet other contexts of EFL or even beyond (say in ESL contexts), or applied to other second or foreign languages and their learning and teaching.

As editors, we acknowledge the kaleidoscope of contexts, experiences and theoretical lenses in portraying the complexity of learning and teaching EFL. We do not advocate in favour of this or that approach, but of a multidisciplinary perspective which can show the different images at each turn of the kaleidoscope.

Notes

1. We decided to stick to traditional terminology (i.e., *EFL* as opposed to English as a Second Language, ESL) instead of making use of some more recent terminology such as that of Braj Kachru (Expanding Circle as opposed to Inner Circle and Outer Circle) or more novel terms such as Type B macro-acquisition as opposed to Type A (Brutt-Griffler 2002), or English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) (e.g., Jenkins 2007).
2. As for key terminology, we opted for the term *narrative*, however, being aware of alternatives, such as (auto)biography, (self-)narrative, life stories, and a more specific term, that is, language learning histories or LLHs; for a nice summary in the context of second language learning, see Benson (2005).
3. Inspired by Chapter 6 written by Leena Karlsson, we extended the metaphor of kaleidoscope to cover all types of narrative research on learning and teaching EFL.
4. As mentioned, Polkinghorne (1995) divides ways of doing narrative research into two types; Lieblich et al. (1998) into four types: holistic-content vs. holistic-form; categorical-content vs. categorical-form; and most recently; Pavlenko (2007) into three types: analysis of subject reality (as a rule, making use of content or thematic analysis), life reality, and text reality.
5. A research project *English Voices in Finnish Society* addresses these issues. It is a project funded by the Academy of Finland and part of a Centre of Excellence in Research *The Study of Variation, Contact and Change in English*, or VARIENG, a joint venture of the University of Helsinki and University of Jyväskylä, Finland.
6. School terminology is problematic, so please note that it varies from one section to another of this chapter and later on from one chapter to another.
7. We wish to thank Dr Tim Murphey and Professor Charles Browne (Meiji Gakuin University) for providing us with this description.

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