English in the multilingual classroom: implications for research, policy and practice

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Abstract

Purpose – The shift in the function of English as a medium of instruction together with its use in knowledge construction and dissemination among scholars continue to fuel the global demand for high-level proficiency in the language. These components of the global knowledge economy mean that the ability of nations to produce multilinguals with advanced English proficiency alongside their mastery of other languages has become a key to global competitiveness. That need is helping to drive one of the greatest language learning experiments the world has ever known. It carries significant implications for new research agendas and teacher preparation in applied linguistics.

Design/methodology/approach – Evidence-based decision-making, whether it pertains to language policy decisions, instructional practices, teacher professional development or curricula/program building, needs to be based on a rigorous and systematically pursued program of research and assessment.

Findings – This paper seeks to advance these objectives by identifying new research foci that underscore a student-centered approach.

Originality/value – It introduces a new theoretical construct – multilingual proficiency – to underscore the knowledge that the learner develops in the process of language learning that makes for the surest route to the desired high levels of language proficiency. The paper highlights the advantages of a student-centered approach that focuses on multilingual proficiency for teachers and explores the concomitant conclusions for teacher development.

Keywords Research, Internationalization, Language, Literacy, Policy and education

Paper type Conceptual paper

Introduction

Today's institutions of higher education are increasingly tied to the global knowledge economy and tasked with preparing students and researchers to succeed transnationally. That includes the universities that are becoming regional centers of learning. Scientists and other professionals require access to the latest research as well as the ability to disseminate their ideas to the widest audience possible to promote economic and social advancement. To advance the project of global interconnectedness and knowledge production, it necessitates that we assess some of the current trends in

higher education and policies with respect to systems of communication, English in particular. The ability of nations to produce multilinguals with advanced proficiency has become a key to global competitiveness. To participate fully in the world today means that students will more often need *multilingual proficiency* – a theoretical construct that I put forward in this account that measures the ability to communicate in a multilingual world. Knowledge of English is, for many, a key component of such proficiency. There is, consequently, a need to enhance preparation of English teachers and advance new research agenda in English language education.

The present day reach of English education is, in some respects, one of the greatest language learning experiments the world has ever known. As I first pointed out in my book *World English: A Study of Its Development*, for speakers across the globe, English is, by its nature, a language of multilingualism and multilinguals, and English has established itself alongside other languages in many speech communities around the world. This process takes on different forms and intensity and generates a good deal of intellectual debate in the field of applied linguistics (Brutt-Griffler and Kim, 2016; Kramsch, 2016; Seidlhofer, 2011; Widdowson, 2003). My goal in this paper is to look at some of the current processes and consider what drives English learning today, what impact it has on preparing future professionals and students and what kind of new research is needed to understand the needs of the learner.

English in education: the construction and dissemination of knowledge

I locate the shift in the function of English as a medium of instruction as one of the significant processes that impacts English education and the field of applied linguistics today. While English continues to be one of the main languages taught as a subject in many national school systems, English now increasingly serves as *a medium of instruction* in a growing number of schools and particularly in universities worldwide (Dearden, 2015). In other words, students in many universities outside of what is thought of as English-speaking contexts may pursue their university education in English in content areas such as business, medicine or engineering. We can, for example, see this process unfolding in the European Union, as detailed in a recent study devoted to the topic of English-medium instruction in the 28 EU member states (Wächter and Maiworm, 2014) supported by the European Commission's Directorate General for Education and Culture and published by the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA). The authors count 8,089 ETPs, a steep growth when compared to the 725 such ETPs in 2001. The study notes that "there is now little doubt that a critical mass of ETPs is on offer across non-English-speaking Europe" (Wächter and Maiworm, 2014, p. 16), with The Netherlands, Germany, Sweden, France taking the lead in terms of numbers. It continues, "one of the policy priorities in Europe – and increasingly elsewhere in the world, too – has been to remove or to reduce barriers possibly preventing students from becoming internationally mobile" (Wächter and Maiworm, 2014, p. 25). To overcome the "linguistic disadvantage", the systems set the trend in offering instruction in the most widely taught language in secondary education world-wide, English.

This shift in the function of English in academia is a significant modification of the earlier role of English as a so-called "foreign" language. It carries important implications for getting students ready, ensuring quality instruction in earlier grades, especially at secondary school levels, to equip them with the advanced language proficiencies to study and be assessed in English in a range of subjects at the university level. The use of English as a medium of instruction requires a high level of language proficiencies on the part of the students, faculty and administration to deliver quality curricula. Its use also creates a

unique opportunity for many international students to study the language(s) and culture of the host country as well.

A second driver for English learning and use takes the form of its growing role in scientific dissemination. Scholarly publishing in top tier international venues has become almost synonymous with publishing in English. Recent data point out that over 90 per cent of articles in the natural sciences are written in English and more than 70 per cent in the social sciences and humanities (Hyland, 2015; Ferguson *et al.*, 2011; Hamel, 2007). We see a slight difference across disciplinary boundaries, with the highest average in English publishing in mathematics and physics, as illustrated in Table I.

Taking the same timeframe, we observe that scientific production and dissemination globally shows a steady and upward progression in English and a corresponding decline in other languages (Figure 1).

Languages	Biology	Chemistry	Physics	Medicine	Mathematics	Natural sciences (average)
English	91.6	83.2	94.8	88.6	94.3	90.7
Russian	1.9	3.8	0.2	1.6	3.2	2.1
Japanese	1.1	3.9	1.7	1.8	0.2	1.7
German	1.1	1.9	0.9	2.2	0.3	1.3
French	1.4	0.7	0.4	1.9	2.3	1.2
Chinese	0.8	4.2	1.2	0.1	1.1	–
Spanish	0.6	0.3	0.0	1.2	0.1	–
Italian	0.3	–	0.1	0.6	0.1	–
Portuguese	0.3	–	–	0.1	–	–
Other	0.9	1.1	0.7	1.9	–	3.0

Table I. Share of languages in several natural sciences in 1996

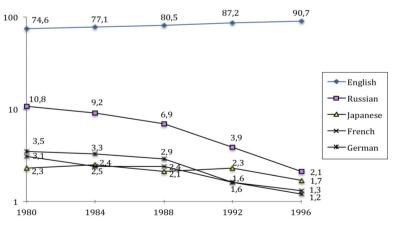**Sources:** Biological, Chemical, Physical Abstracts, Medline, MathSci Disc; Hamel (2007)

Figure 1. Share of languages in natural science publications worldwide 1980-1996

Note: Percent of total publications, ordinate compressed
Source: Hamel (2007)

Databases are another indicator of scientific production and communication. Humanities databases (e.g. MLA) point to a greater language distribution while social sciences again tend to index English medium sources (see Table II for the language share).

Many national systems have created a reward system that privileges English language publications and, thus, reinforces the need for advanced academic literacy in English. Such academic literacy is not innate but developed over a lengthy process of formal education. There is an evidentiary basis that writing in English can, and does, "impose an additional burden on some non-Anglophone researchers" (Ferguson *et al.*, 2011, p. 43). Specific areas of linguistic difficulty include "a 'less rich vocabulary' and 'less facility in expression'" (Ferguson *et al.*, 2011, p. 43), "word choice and sentence syntax" (Ferguson *et al.*, 2011, p. 43), specificities of scientific discourse and authorial voice and "time needed to learn English to a high level" (Ferguson *et al.*, 2011, p. 44). Beyond the linguistic domain, researchers need to devote additional time to "substantive matters of research design and methodology, focus, narrative, and coherence of argument" (Ferguson *et al.*, 2011, p. 42). Surveying the field, we find a multitude of attitudes on the dominance of English (DoE) in scientific communication. Ferguson *et al.*'s (2011) recent study with 300 scientists finds that 83 per cent of the subjects believe that there is a need for one international language of science. Interestingly, the study finds that:

> [. . .] the higher the subjects' perceived language proficiency, the less likely they are to agree that the DoE is an unjust advantage to English native-speaking academics and the more likely they are to agree that the advantages of English in their work outweigh the disadvantages (Ferguson *et al.*, 2011, p. 54).

Those who take a pragmatic approach believe that English as an international language "facilitates international co-operation, enables scholars to more easily keep abreast of developments in their discipline and generates a wider potential readership for their published outputs" (Ferguson *et al.*, 2011, p. 52). Researchers in physical sciences see as it more advantageous to have one international language of science as opposed to those in social sciences or humanities that are connected more to a national context of research and/or dissemination to communities that may not have equal access to English (Flowerdew, 2013; Hamel, 2007). Ferguson *et al.*'s (2011, p. 56) study rightly concludes that preparation in academic writing and "teachers of academic

Data bases	German	Spanish	French	English	Italian
A & H Search	8.15	2.11	11.65	71.95	3.70
Delphes	0.89	0.90	89.98	7.76	0.49
Econlit	–	1.00	2.20	95.6	1.20
Eric	0.05	0.16	0.37	99.37	0.01
Francis	5.22	4.11	35.02	32.72	4.61
Historical Abstracts	7.85	2.26	6.85	77.73	2.46
LLBA	6.29	1.77	7.82	76.32	1.23
MLA	7.55	6.57	9.02	73.63	2.00
Philosopher Index	7.00	6.33	3.00	78.01	2.66
Psych Info	1.34	0.85	1.16	95.20	0.42
Sociological Abstracts	3.65	2.07	4.56	85.75	1.37
Social Science & Search	2.95	0.33	1.64	93.66	0.04

Notes: LLBA: Linguistics & Language Behavior Abstracts; MLA: Modern Language Abstracts
Source: Hamel (2007)

Table II.
Share of languages in selected data bases in the social sciences and humanities from 1992 to 1997

writing in English are important agents in mitigating any disadvantage that flows from it".

In sum, the role of English in higher education and knowledge dissemination are significant. It determines the need for high levels of proficiency, inclusive of using the language to both understand and produce academic/professional writing aimed at and produced by an international English medium community of experts. There is much more to it than mere disciplinary terminology. To meet the demands of the global market place, including knowledge dissemination, some areas of education, particularly within Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) as well as in the domain of business and management have turned to English as a medium of instruction in higher education. That reality in turn affects the primary and secondary school levels. In order that STEM and other professionals not face a double burden of both achieving in their field of expertise while struggling with the language demands the need for English places on them, the educational system must establish a base for an exact understanding of national needs, assessment databases and professional English teacher preparation, with a focus on advanced academic literacy skills.

A new theoretical focus for English applied linguistics

To address the processes in higher education and global knowledge economies, the field of English applied linguistics has generated an enormous literature that can provide guidance. There is no more global enterprise than English teaching and learning. It takes place in literally every nation of the world and involves millions of people. Yet, when we look at the picture globally, we often find a disconnect between the typical English learning context and the conditions and assumptions that continue to a large extent to dominate the field of English applied linguistics. The vast and ever-growing majority of English learning takes place outside of the principal English speaking nations. Yet much of the field of English applied linguistics continues to respond to the educational concerns that arise within them.

First among them is the need to educate children who speak another language at home in school systems in which English is the exclusive medium of instruction. With ever-greater frequency, primary school classrooms in English-speaking nations are filled with learners from myriad language backgrounds, part of a broader phenomenon that has come to be known as the "multilingual classroom". It has been a prominent trend in the USA, UK, Canada and Australia for decades. More recently, it has spread far beyond their borders, now encompassing, for instance, many of the nations that make up the EU. In the careful language of the world of gray literature, such as the European Commission's (2015a) report *Language teaching and learning in multilingual classrooms*, the "multilingual classroom" is called a "challenge", by which is really meant a *problem*. The approach advocated in such reports, backed up by a body of academic literature and government policy, is to try to mitigate this problem. That consists of the taken-for-granted circumstance that the teacher does not speak the home languages of the multilingual students while the students have only limited proficiency in the language of instruction used in the classroom.

The goal is a "least-worst" outcome. Because, any countervailing research conclusions aside, practical constraints dictate a policy of "mainstreaming" students as quickly as possible into classes taught in the target language, whether they are actually ready for such a transition, the results for students can be anything but optimal. The EC (2015a, p. 13) report notes, "Assessment tools and assessors with negative perceptions of migrant children's abilities which allocate more of them to lower ability tracks and special education

classes". The students also "lack [...] opportunities to develop their mother tongue competences to higher levels" (p. 13). One unfortunate result is that the European Union has effectively dropped all discussions of its policy of "mother tongue +2" – two additional languages in addition to the child's first language. That laudable goal now seems to promise too much when applied to what the EC (2015a) calls Europe's "migrant" students, the broad definition of which includes even the grandchildren of persons not born in the country. The policy of mainstreaming prioritizes protecting the role of the language of instruction and insuring that students learn it over the former goal of European-wide multilingualism. It may be a concession to what are seen to be practical impossibilities. It is one, nevertheless, for which children rather than the society as a whole are asked to pay the price.

Even when the outcome measured in terms of learning the language of instruction of the educational system is good, the child's experience can nevertheless be trying in the extreme. A graduate student of mine from southern Europe whom I shall call Eva found herself mainstreamed in the US school system before she had mastered even the rudiments of the language and with no one able to help her in her first language. Isolated and struggling, to this day she vividly recalls what she considers to be the "trauma" that she experienced as a primary school student. She emphasizes that she, as an aspiring language teacher, would not willingly put any child in that circumstance no matter how favorable the outcome.

To advance the agenda of applied linguistics, the field needs to be liberated from a too-close attachment to language learning in the USA and EU, where the most urgent need is often transitioning students to the language of instruction and leaving their first language behind. Leaving aside for the moment whether such "mainstreaming" is best for the students in these circumstances, we ought to be able to admit that these circumstances peculiar to English-speaking nations are not those upon which we should generalize to the far more prevalent conditions to be found for the most of the world's hundreds of millions of English learners. The same is true for the other major strand of English applied linguistics research that stems from the ESL classroom at universities in mainly English-speaking nations – a second overemphasized site of research given in its limited share of the English language market. It too features multilingual backgrounds of students, which the instructor does not share with them.

Overgeneralizing from contexts where the teacher does not know the learners' language to those where the teacher and students share both languages has the tendency to make a virtue of necessity. The result of neglecting the student's first language in the process of learning and becoming proficient in a second may not produce the kind of trauma that it meant for Eva, but it can result in confusion and frustration, neither of which is necessary or productive. Why would we not make use of all of the knowledge a student brings into the classroom in the effort to help them learn more? From a student-centered perspective the "problem" lies not with the knowledge of the student but often with that of the teacher, who in some cases may lack the language proficiency to unleash the learning potential of the student.

When students study subjects such as math, engineering or technology, we recognize that they develop a body of knowledge. On the other hand, we do not always readily acknowledge the body of knowledge that they develop as they learn multiple languages. Because of the focus on proficiency in the target language (L2), at an earlier juncture in the development of applied linguistics, the tendency grew to view knowledge of the first language (L1) from the standpoint of its negative impact on the learning of the second. There arose an extensive literature on "transfer errors" (for a review, see Odlin, 1989). They were

held to be of such importance that the learner from the standpoint of the mainstream second language acquisition theoretical frameworks has been viewed as speaking an interlanguage, an incomplete system.

The consequences shaped notions of pedagogy. As a source of "interference", at the height of the influence of this paradigm, the first language came to be almost regarded with suspicion in the classroom (De Angelis and Selinker, 2001; Selinker, 1983). The best way to learn was thought to be to "immerse" the student in the target language with the notion being that assuring error free input would somehow best lead to error free output. It was almost looked at as language learning de novo, the acquisition of a new linguistic "system" to which previous learning had little, if anything, to contribute. It became almost irrelevant whether the teacher spoke the learner's L1.

Such an approach takes for granted the far more extensive "positive transfer" that goes unnoticed. An L2 can, of course, only be learned at all because the learner previously speaks an L1. We have all experienced this taken-for-granted aspect of language learning. What challenges us most in learning a second language are those components that are missing in our L1 or are so radically different that we struggle to grasp them. If the L1 and L2 share an alphabet or writing system, we breeze through that portion. If not, we laboriously learn that of the target language. It is far more difficult to acquire an L2 with extensive declensions, or a case system of nouns, coming from a first language largely without them. Languages with elaborate morphosyntax of tense, aspect and mood conjugations require tremendous time and effort to master where they differ extensively from our first languages.

We also miss a process every bit as significant: the use of an L2 in learning a third language. Once we have first learned some grammatical forms we have never before encountered, we no longer need to do so if they exist in another language we attempt to learn. The Latin alphabet, with minor modifications, is common to English, French, Spanish and German. A learner of French whose first language uses a different writing system but who has learned English will draw on his knowledge of that language and not the L1 (Bardel and Falk, 2007; Cenoz, 2001; Grosjean, 2001; Cook, 1995).

What happens, if instead of taking for granted in our theories learning always consists of the expansion of the learner's body of knowledge we make that the theoretical focus? A learner-centric approach, by focusing on the student, leads us to an understanding based on what I will call *multilingual proficiency*. I define this concept as a person's total linguistic proficiency across two or more languages. I do not have in mind here mere *"awareness"* of other languages, as we hear so much about today with respect to the multilingual classroom. I mean *knowledge* of these languages.

The notion of multilingual proficiency is meant to underscore knowledge that the learner develops in the process of language learning. It recognizes that language learning capacities among students are virtually without limit and conceptually it does not limit itself as a model to one or two languages. Multilingual proficiency recognizes that there is an aspect of language learning, in the form of *knowledge of language*, that is acquired in the study of multiple languages. That knowledge of language acquired in studying languages in turn aids learning additional languages. Thus, for example, knowing how cases or conjugation are used in one language can aid learning the system in another. A student's multilingualism is a resource rather than a problem. Unlocking and helping the student to apply their knowledge should be an essential goal of teaching – one that is best activated by direct appeal to their existing multilingual proficiency in helping them acquire still more.

Multilingual proficiency development constitutes an intellectual endeavor in which in the process of language learning a learner uses the knowledge from various languages (Baker, 2011; Lantolf and Thorne, 2006; Brutt-Griffler and Varghese, 2004; Swain and Lapkin, 2000). Thus taking knowledge as its point of departure, multilingual proficiency becomes an objective measure of language learning from its incipient stages all the way through the attainment of advanced level of proficiency in multiple languages.

Neither am I here referring to what has come to be called "translanguaging", (García and Wei, 2014) the mixing of two languages together. Multilingual proficiency includes the ability to distinguish one language from another. The notion of multilingual proficiency recognizes that proficient speakers are perfectly able to keep their languages distinct. It is incontestably among the most important of skills in a multilingual world, and, of course, one of the driving forces of English learning in the world today.

It goes without saying that learning English is not, as is sometimes falsely assumed from a monolingualist standpoint, a rejection of the advantages of learning other languages. On the contrary, English learners around the world recognize the equal importance of knowing other languages. If we listen, therefore, to the students on whom a student-centered model must be constructed we hear them emphasizing through their actions their own understanding of the need for multilingual proficiency. Their goal is to learn English alongside other languages they grew up speaking, learned from the context around them, or studied in school.

Language is perhaps the only realm in education in which a student's knowledge is often not credited. It would be unthinkable in mathematics or science education to take no account of a student's previous knowledge in teaching the subjects. Yet confining an English language classroom, however multilingual, to one language of instruction can have just that effect. Worse, we may look at quite linguistically accomplished multilinguals through something approaching a deficit model, a significant part of the trauma Eva faced, and made worse by the tendency noted by the EU report on the multilingual classroom to place such students into special education. In such circumstances, their very accomplishments as multilinguals are held against them. But this can happen as well in more subtle ways in every English language classroom that replaces multilingual proficiency with English proficiency viewed in isolation. An alternative consists in recognizing the implications that a student-centered approach that focuses on multilingual proficiency holds for teachers.

New roles for English teachers
A Saudi PhD student enrolled in an applied linguistics program in the USA recalls the first time she entered an English classroom in KSA. She began to address the undergraduate students in English, only to have them stop her and say in Arabic, "no, we don't know what you're saying [. . .] we don't know English. Tell us in Arabic so we can understand." Her surprised reaction was to think "this is my first time teaching [. . .] I'm not going to ruin it for myself [. . .] I'm gonna follow the rules." Her co-workers told her, "don't listen to them [. . .] that's the school policy [. . .] you have to speak in English all the time." She decided that she had no choice but to use Arabic despite of the policy. The result, she recalls, was immediate: "they were responsive [. . .] they were actively engaged."

Not all multilingual classrooms are thereby the same. A multilingual classroom may be one where there are multiple languages, but in a state of dormancy. Or it may be one in which students' multilingual proficiency is activated. The EC (2015b, p. 4) writes in its report on the multilingual classroom, "teaching culture urgently needs to adapt to the presence of several languages in the classrooms". It is evidence that the pendulum has

swung decisively back the other way in acknowledging the place of students' first language in the second language learning classroom, confirming that the above mentioned English teacher instinctively made a good choice in the context where she taught (Storch and Aldosari, 2010).

It goes without saying that the Saudi PhD student in her stint as a teacher of English in KSA could only make the decision she did because she had the requisite proficiency in the students' first language. And yet one place we continue to see the influence of the theoretical models to which applied linguistics remains stubbornly attached, and which produce policies like the English-only classroom, is in the lack of attention to the multilingual proficiency of teachers. One adaptation the EC never mentions in the quest to alter "teaching culture" is the training of teachers in multilingual proficiency and the strategic and planned use of students' language to allow them to access the curriculum or content in the class (Ferguson, 2003). And yet it might easily be supposed that multilingual students require multilingual teachers. In that case, teacher and student have something essential in common: the skills and knowledge of a multilingual, or multilingual proficiency. In that understanding a multilingual classroom would not be one that is simply characterized by students who among them bring two or more home languages different than the medium of instruction. In the more meaningful form of the term, a multilingual classroom is one in which both students and teachers are multilingual and in which they bring their multilingual proficiency to bear on the dual tasks of teaching and learning.

To be fully accurate, the EC (2015a) report does all but admit that it would be better to fully serve students if teachers were multilingual. But the idea is then dismissed as impractical – or, rather, it is not discussed and readers are left to draw that conclusion themselves. What else can we conclude when the EC (2015a, p. 54) admits that students do better with the "adaptation of teaching to provide academic vocabulary in [the] mother tongue", and that "staff having the same mother tongue and cultural background as the children who can win their trust" (p. 51)? The authors of the report even go as far as to claim that "opportunities for schools to use bilingual [...] approaches [to] teaching are available where many children have the same mother tongues" (EC, 2015a, p. 71). Finally, they note, "Having qualified mother tongue teachers in schools and mother tongues included in language curricula and examinations encourage mother tongue learning" (EC, 2015a), p. 71). That is, such teachers promote what I am calling multilingual proficiency.

These conclusions are drawn without being emphasized. They constitute an important and almost surprising admission. When transferred from the EU context to that of English teaching globally, the real advantage is to the laudable goal of building a *learner-centered* educational system. Multilingual proficiency is best modeled by multilingual teachers, or, put another way, teachers with multilingual proficiency are needed to develop that set of skills within students.

Implications for research agendas
Evidence-based decision-making, whether it pertains to language policy decisions, instructional practices, teacher professional development or curricula/program building, needs to be based on a rigorous and systematically pursued program of research and assessment. First, a research agenda should emerge from the kinds of contexts in which English learning and teaching takes place and should be aligned with the needs of the students and teachers. It should, therefore, be learner centered. It must proceed not from the conceptualization of the multilingual classroom as a "problem" but as a body of knowledge

to be leveraged in the interests of the expansion of language learning and developing proficient users of the language(s). It must also be driven by new theoretical models of language learning. In this respect, the notion of multilingual proficiency can help overcome the limitations of many of the monolingualist assumptions held in the field. Pedagogies that are backed by rigorous classroom research that prepare teachers for how using more than one language in the classroom can mutually reinforce each can help address the new trends in higher education.

A new research agenda, therefore, needs to pursue research programs coalescing around:

- a learner-centered approach and instructional practices;
- teacher professional development;
- developing national assessment data on learning outcomes.

With respect to a learner centered approach and for reasons discussed in the first part of this paper, in higher education today learners often face the dual challenge of learning content (e.g. science, STEM, arts and social science) through the second language that they are acquiring. Researchers, therefore, should consider important questions with respect to precise learning goals and teaching practices in school curricula. These should include whether schools should build curricula that incorporate model(s) of a *content and language integrated learning* (CLIL) approach, where the curricular content is taught through the medium of a second language; and if so, how much explicit language scaffolding should be provided to achieve the desired language learning outcomes in the classroom? Current research from the English CLIL classroom points to many benefits (Dalton-Puffer, 2011). Research also needs to provide evidence of whether existing language programs have the capacities to develop independent writers and readers for tertiary programming demands.

At the core of a learner-centered approach, researchers need to pay attention to student engagement (affective, cognitive and behavioral) in learning (Brutt-Griffler and Kim, 2017). Based on well-grounded and newly emerging evidence, I consider student engagement to be one of the important factors that will mediate the relationship between teachers' instructional practices and students' academic outcomes, as illustrated in Figure 2.

Equally important, teachers are often not sufficiently prepared in instructional practices that capitalize on new technologies and aid learner centered learning (inquiry based, cooperative learning or e-portfolio assessment). A research agenda, therefore, needs to help to identify best instructional practices so that these are modeled and rewarded by school leaders. Research is also needed with respect to the professional development of teachers, including identifying and analyzing the qualities of effective teachers, curricula and course
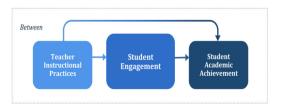

Figure 2.
Student-centric
model: student
engagement as a
mediator between
teacher instructional
practices and student
academic
achievement

design and integrating these concepts into their teaching and instructional strategies. Enhancing teachers' instructional practices via engaging them in teacher inclusive educational research and/or study abroad dual degree programming can aid the expectations of excellence in language teaching.

Developing a new agenda in English education also requires steps to building a national database on learning outcomes/assessment and teacher preparation. A data system that efficiently and accurately collects, manages, analyzes and uses education data can be a powerful source of assessment, an essential mechanism for understanding and improving language education in the public and private sectors. It can provide reliable data for longitudinal and large-scale empirical research on academic performance and literacy of the nation's students. Such a database could be housed in a National Center for English Development and Research (CEDR) and be available to its stakeholders - program administrators, policymakers and researchers.

Conclusion

In *World English: A Study of its Development* and a number of related publications, I stressed the condition that English around the world has become a language of multilinguals, with important implications of the language. But that important quality of the global English language has equally crucial ramifications for pedagogy. It is my contention that much of this insight will emerge from the kinds of contexts around the world in which most English learning takes place and will do so where pedagogy is adapted most to the needs of the students. A student-centered approach to teaching English makes demands on teachers and educational policy, both of which must look to new frontiers in research for guidance. The question of how to develop teachers for the demands of educating students in English that serves such vital functions for its speakers depends on new understandings of the process of second language acquisition rooted in the experiences of multilinguals and multilingualism. In charting a vision for a research program to establish the direction forward for the field of English applied linguistics, I have introduced the understanding of *multilingual proficiency*. This new paradigm stems from our need to reverse the usual lens on language learning that makes use of a deficit model of the learner's knowledge and ask instead what knowledge teachers and students have in common as multilinguals. The research foci I outline above constitute an important starting point.

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